

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. NICHOLAS C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Church, Accrington

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119447

Headteacher: Mr Nick Walker

Lead inspector: Mike Onyon

Dates of inspection: 29th November – 1st December 2004

Inspection number: 266624

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: 219

School address: St Nicholas Road,
Dill Hill Lane,
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Accrington
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Rev. Neville Ashton

Date of previous inspection: 26th – 29th April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a voluntary aided Church of England primary school of average size, with 219 pupils on roll. The school caters for pupils from the age of four to eleven years. A small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language and 96 per cent of the pupils are of white British ethnicity. The school serves an area of social deprivation and children's attainment on entry is well below average, with particular weaknesses in language, literacy and communication. An above average percentage of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, with moderate and specific learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The number of pupils leaving and joining the school other than at the usual time is broadly average, with considerable fluctuation in some year groups. The school is actively involved with the local 'Sure Start' programme, supporting the induction of children into the reception class. As part of the Hyndburn 'excellence' cluster of schools, learning mentors have been appointed to support pupils' learning. The school received an Achievement Award in 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18146	Mike Onyon	Lead inspector	English as an additional language, science, art and design, geography, history.
11077	Janet Harrison	Lay inspector	
32133	Joan Elton	Team inspector	Special educational needs, English, information and communication technology, music, citizenship
28686	Elizabeth Walker	Team inspector	Foundation stage, mathematics, design and technology, physical education.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school that provides good value for money. Children's level of attainment on entry is well below average. Since the previous inspection the school has focused well on English and mathematics in particular and standards are currently above average in both subjects. In science and information and communication technology (ICT) standards are average. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Leadership and management are good; governance is effective.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good leadership by the headteacher, who works well with the effective governors in focusing upon continual improvement.
- Very good teaching gives children a good start in the Foundation Stage, and good teaching throughout the school is leading to pupils' good achievement.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave very well. The school provides well for their health, welfare and safety.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as the result of the very good provision made for them.
- The school's systems for assessing pupils' progress are very good, enabling the school to respond well to individual pupils' needs, but are not yet used to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils in full.
- While accommodation is satisfactory overall, the provision for outdoor play for children in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory and is holding back their physical development.

Since the last inspection, overall improvement has been good. Standards have improved in English, ICT and geography. There is now better monitoring of the quality of teaching and the curriculum, which has led improvement. Challenging targets are set for pupils to help them improve in English and mathematics. While results in the Year 6 national tests in English, mathematics and science have varied, standards are now average and management is clearly focused on further improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	All schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	C	D	C	B
Mathematics	D	D	D	D
Science	E	D	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.*

Overall, standards of attainment represent **good achievement** for the pupils, taking account of their well below average level of attainment when they enter the school. Children achieve well in reception, but are still below the levels they are expected to reach by the end of the reception year in all the required areas of learning. Overall, pupils'

achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good, and the Year 2 test results in 2004 were well above the national average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. The results in reading and writing were well above those of similar schools. Current standards in Year 2 are average in reading, writing, mathematics, science and ICT. Overall achievement in Years 3 to 6 is good. Comparison with schools where pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2 in mathematics and science indicates below, and well below average progress. However, the 2004 results reflect the school's focused efforts in English. Pupils are developing learning skills which support their future learning effectively. The impact in mathematics and science has been slower, but is now being seen. Because of a clear focus on literacy skills, applying mathematical skills and investigational work in science, current standards in Year 6 are above average in English and mathematics, and average in science and ICT. There has been clear progress in science and ICT and standards are rising. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well. Teachers use assessment very well to match activities to the needs of most pupils, but could do more to stretch higher attaining pupils.

Pupils' personal qualities are good. Their attitudes to learning are positive and they behave very well. The school's Christian ethos effectively promotes pupils' good spiritual, social and cultural development; moral development is very good. Attendance has improved and is good. It is promoted well by the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. The quality of teaching is good overall, with excellent and very good teaching observed in the Foundation Stage. Examples of very good teaching were seen in English, mathematics and ICT. Teachers have a good knowledge of the areas of learning and subjects taught. They plan lessons very well, establish very good relationships with pupils and insist on high standards of behaviour. Pupils respond well and teaching is better than at the time of the previous inspection, contributing well to effective learning. Teachers use a good range of resources effectively, as well as a very good range of teaching strategies. The high standards of behaviour promote equality of opportunity for all pupils well. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with good opportunities provided for enrichment. The care and support offered to pupils are good. The school's partnership with the community is good, and there are effective partnerships with other schools and colleges. The partnership with parents is good; parents contribute well to the learning of their children at school and at home.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has established a thorough, detailed self-evaluation process, which enables the school to consider its strengths and weaknesses and its priorities for improvement successfully. The leadership of other key staff is good; staff work hard and are fully committed to the school. There is a very good team spirit. The governing body is fully involved in the process of self-evaluation and provides good governance; governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and help to shape a clear vision for its future. Statutory requirements are met, with minor exceptions in relation to the information given to parents in the governors' annual report and the school prospectus.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Overall, parents regard the school very highly. In particular, they feel that children in the school behave well, are expected to work hard and are treated fairly. They believe that teaching is good, leadership and management are of good quality, staff are approachable and the arrangements for children when they start school are good. Pupils are also very supportive of the school and feel that their views are listened to well and that they are contributing effectively to the life of the school. Pupils know that there is an adult they can go to if they are worried at school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Further improve the levels of challenge in activities for higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils.
- Improve provision for outdoor play for children in the Foundation Stage, to assist their physical development.

To meet statutory requirements fully the school should:

- Improve the information available to parents in the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is a measure of how well pupils are doing, taking their progress and their capability into account.

Achievement is good overall for all groups of pupils. When children enter the school, levels of attainment are well below average. By the end of reception they are below average. Standards are average in reading, writing, science and mathematics in Year 2. Standards are above average in English and mathematics in Year 6, and average in science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As the result of very good teaching children make a very good start in the reception class.
- Achievement is good because of the improvement in teaching and the current strengths in teaching.
- Standards in mathematics and science in Year 6 are improving as the result of a focus on these subjects in the school's planning.
- Because their needs are identified early, and teachers know them well, pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Levels of challenge for higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils are insufficiently high.

Commentary

1. Most children start school with well below average levels of attainment and they achieve well in the Foundation Stage, because of the consistently good and very good teaching and a good curriculum that is well matched to their needs. As a result, their progress is good and by the time they enter Year 1 standards are below, rather than well below, the levels expected in the areas of learning. Their physical development is held back by the limited provision for outdoor play.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.9 (16.8)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	16.9 (16.5)	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	15.7 (16.5)	16.2 (16.3)

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

2. The 2004 national test results for Year 2 were above average in reading, well above average in writing and below average in mathematics, reflecting the school's focus on literacy skills. Teacher assessments indicate above average outcomes, overall, in science. The focus on literacy has led to improvements in the outcomes of writing tests, with well above average results recorded. The results also indicate that higher

attaining pupils did as well as might be expected in reading and mathematics, much better than expected in writing, but not as well as expected in science. Standards this year are average in reading, writing, mathematics and science, and this represents good achievement. There are a number of reasons why pupils do well in Years 1 and 2. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils do well in reading and writing because the school places emphasis on these subjects and skills are used well in other subjects of the curriculum. In science, an increasing emphasis on investigational skills contributes to pupils' good progress. More emphasis could be placed on providing challenging opportunities for more able pupils to encourage them to develop their skills, for example, by working collaboratively. Standards in ICT are average by Year 2, but this represents an improvement from the previous inspection.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.5 (25.9)	26.9 (26.8)
Mathematics	26.0 (25.9)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	27.0 (27.9)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 35 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- In 2004 the number of pupils with special educational needs in Year 6 was higher than usual. Results in the national tests were average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science. Data also indicated that, when compared with schools that achieved similar average points scores at the end of Year 2, standards were below average in mathematics and well below average in science. This reflects the school's considerable focus on developing literacy skills and support for pupils with special educational needs. Results in 2004 were also affected by a higher than average number of pupils joining the group between Years 2 and 6. There has been less improvement in mathematics and science. Standards in the current Year 6 are above average in English and mathematics and average in science. As the result of the detailed analysis of the outcomes of assessments the school is successfully focusing teaching on the areas where attainment has been weakest. Literacy skills have improved and pupils are better able to apply their skills in mathematics. A focused emphasis on investigational work in science is improving pupils' scientific knowledge and helping them to apply their skills well. In comparison with 2003, standards have improved in English, mathematics and science as a result of the ongoing focus on literacy and the increasing focus on problem-solving and investigational work in mathematics and science. Pupils are achieving well.
- Very good support is given to pupils with special educational needs, who achieve well because their work is tailored to their individual needs and builds steadily on previous learning. Teachers and learning support assistants know and plan for their needs effectively. The pupils are fully integrated into classroom activities and other pupils are sensitive to their needs, helping them to achieve well. The small number of pupils learning English as an additional language are supported well. Opportunities are provided in lessons to ensure that these pupils are fully included and able to take part in activities to assist their learning. The achievement of higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils is currently satisfactory. A strength of the school is its provision for pupils with special educational needs. Now that provision for them is secure and well developed, the school is beginning to focus upon the needs of more able pupils. More

can be done to ensure that opportunities are consistently provided for them to extend their learning in lessons and, through additional activities outside the usual classroom activities, to enable them to reach their full potential.

5. There are several reasons why standards are currently above average in English and mathematics, and average in science, in Year 6. The school provides a well-planned, rich curriculum in these subjects, focusing upon key areas of learning. Teachers present the curriculum in an interesting way, often involving pupils through the good use of questions, to test their understanding. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and the school has recently revised its assessment procedures to begin to identify, in detail, individual pupils' strengths and areas for development, and has begun to involve them in setting targets to enable them to improve their work. This is particularly effective in English and mathematics, where the process can be seen in classrooms through group targets on display. Good emphasis upon literacy skills across the curriculum has led to improvements in English. Standards have improved and are now average in ICT, because the school places emphasis on the teaching of skills and pupils are encouraged to use the skills when working in other subjects. The recently equipped ICT suite is used well to teach skills in the subject and its effective use is beginning to have a good effect upon standards in the subject, showing an improvement since the previous inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils behave very well and have positive attitudes towards the school and their work. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory. Moral development is very good; spiritual, social and cultural development are good, so that these aspects of provision are good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave very well and have good attitudes; this enables effective learning.
- Attendance has improved and is good.
- The school effectively promotes good personal development.

Commentary

6. Pupils are pleased with their school. They say it is a friendly school, their lessons are interesting and their teachers are helpful. They behave very well, both in and out of the classroom, in response to the teachers' high and consistent expectations. Pupils have good attitudes towards learning and show respect for their teachers. This sets a good climate for learning in all classes. In a few lessons seen, predominately with the Year 6 pupils, some inattention or too much chatter was observed if the work set did not interest them enough, but attitudes were never less than satisfactory and usually good.
7. As a result of the school's actions, attendance levels last year rose to above the national average. The governors designed a useful pro-forma for parents to use to notify the school of any reasons why their children are absent and this has helped to reduce the level of unauthorised absence. Two pupils in Year 6 have the 'late book' at the school entrance for pupils who are late to sign and this peer pressure is helping to improve punctuality.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.2	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.

- Overall, relationships between pupils and their teachers and their peers are very good. This is evidenced by the fact that there were no exclusions for poor behaviour in the year prior to the inspection. Pupils agree that there are relatively few 'short term fallings out of friendships'. The school takes any such incidences seriously and resolves them appropriately with good procedures. The school promotes racial harmony very effectively. For example, last year a group of pupils enjoyed a day at Blackburn Rovers Football Club, where they worked in team exercises with pupils of differing backgrounds from another primary school. This promoted understanding and tolerance.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved since the last inspection. The school assemblies are of good quality and foster a sense of community. Pupils explore feelings and emotions in their personal and social education and in 'circle time'. In the Year 6 field trip last year, pupils tried 'tree hugging' to feel the tree and reflect on its age and texture. Pupils are invited to reflect on atmosphere in some of their literacy lessons. In some other lessons, however, opportunities to promote spirituality are not always planned and, as a consequence, can be overlooked. Teachers are consistent in their expectations of behaviour and pupils feel that their efforts are recognised and appreciated and so they respond well. The suggestions that pupils have made through the school council, such as a friendship bench, illustrate some considerate attitudes. The school has a very positive approach in recognizing and celebrating a variety of cultures. Pupils recognize both similarities and differences and learn much about festivals and celebrations of different cultures. There are some good displays of pupils' work on multicultural themes in the Key Stage 1 area and there is an attractive display of Japanese banners in the school hall, which the pupils made to remember a visiting Japanese teacher. Parents are rightly pleased with the way the school helps their children make good progress in their personal development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is good and there are good opportunities for enrichment. The care provided for pupils is good. Partnerships with parents and links with other schools, colleges and the community are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. There is a high proportion of teaching which is very good. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. Teachers are very aware of the needs of their pupils and plan their lessons well. Assessment is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant proportion of teaching is very good or better.
- Much of the teaching is of high quality because it is based on very well planned lessons.
- Teaching support assistants are used very well.
- The procedures used to mark and assess pupils' progress are very good. The information collected from all sources is used effectively.
- As the result of high teacher expectations, pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3 %)	16 (44 %)	15 (42 %)	4 (11 %)	0	0	0

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

10. Over three-quarters of the lessons seen during the inspection were judged to be of good or better teaching quality. This is a high proportion and reflects the detailed and thorough planning, the very good use of resources, and the level of support available to pupils during the lessons. This is not atypical; discussions with pupils suggest that this high level of quality teaching is normal and lessons are usually interesting and fun, containing appropriate tasks which both challenge the majority of pupils and enable them to succeed. A small number of higher attaining pupils are sometimes allowed to rest on their laurels and do not always contribute sufficiently to lessons or are sometimes given tasks which they complete easily and quickly, without being challenged by more difficult problems and tasks. The school is aware that work needs to be done in this area. Pupils respond well to their homework tasks; they are used well to consolidate and extend pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics and English.
11. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders have focused very carefully upon the quality of teaching, since the previous inspection. There is a regular programme of lesson observations and samples of pupils' work are scrutinized to ensure that appropriate progress is being made. Structured feedback is given to teachers to enable them to improve. The culture is one of shared aspirations in wishing to develop and maintain high quality teaching and learning.
12. Teaching is clearly focused and pupils are very aware of the learning intention of each lesson. Teachers use a wide range of techniques, including a very good range of questions and challenges to individual pupils. Pupils respond confidently and are encouraged constantly to extend their understanding and thinking skills. Pupils in a Year 4 lesson worked at a very good pace and used their mathematical vocabulary confidently to explore various number facts, estimating and approximating their answers and tackling problems quickly and enthusiastically. The very good use of pupils working in partnership, solving problems and discussing with each other before responding in a larger group, helps them to develop confidence and increases their learning. Pupils' learning is measured very well, because teachers encourage pupils to explore for themselves how well they have achieved in a lesson. Pupils' work is

marked very well and all are given clear guidance on how to improve and achieve their targets.

13. Pupils behave very well in lessons and respond enthusiastically, but with due consideration for others. They work hard and want to succeed. The good rapport between teachers and pupils inspires confidence and persuades pupils to have a go, even when they may not be secure in their answers. Their response is valued and contributes to solving and extending their learning. Where lessons were only satisfactory, pupils were not sufficiently involved, for example in a physical education lesson, where they spent time discussing their own performance and that of others rather than responding to each other's ideas and improving their performance.
14. Pupils make good progress because they are very well supported by teaching assistants who are actively involved with particular groups of pupils throughout each lesson. They are involved in lesson planning, so that they can enable all pupils to participate and contribute their efforts to the lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language achieve as well as others in the group through the very well prepared materials and support they receive.

The curriculum

The breadth of curricular opportunities is good. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation is satisfactory and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Personal, social and health education is taught systematically, often integrated into other subjects.
- Pupils participate well in the arts, sport and other learning activities outside the school day.
- While gifted and talented pupils have been identified, the school does not yet plan fully for their needs.
- The small size of classrooms, particularly in Years 3 to 6, sometimes restricts practical activities.

Commentary

15. Pupils are enthusiastic about their school because teachers work hard to provide many interesting activities across a wide curriculum, which meets statutory requirements. There is a good match of work to ability and teachers regularly check on individual progress to adjust programmes of study if necessary, so as to sustain concentration and development. All programmes of study are kept under regular review to help with innovation and to ensure access and continuity of progress for all. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified and there is provision for some of these pupils. However, provision needs to be subject specific and more finely tuned to individual needs.
16. Pupils with special educational needs have very good access to all aspects of the curriculum. This is because of effective timetabling and planning, careful adaptations to tasks and resources during lessons and highly informed and professional support

during class and withdrawal sessions. These pupils make very good progress, because they are well supported in class by teaching assistants and outside class by highly trained specialists. Lesson planning identifies the needs of those pupils learning English as an additional language. As a result they are provided for well and progress equally as well as other pupils.

17. Pupils receive weekly lessons on personal, social and health education from a well-constructed programme of study. These lessons occur in class discussions, 'circle time' and during assembly. There are also specialist visitors for drugs and sex education; these effectively augment general class programmes. From time to time the school hires additional resources, particularly for health education, to provide additional stimuli. Courtesy and consideration for others are emphasised throughout the school day and staff use every opportunity to teach pupils how to behave in a civilised community. Pupils are encouraged to undertake jobs and responsibilities and they are given praise when they are consistent, caring and reliable. Indeed, the school recognises pupils' achievements throughout the day, informally and formally, by the presentation of certificates and stickers. Staff also ensure pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe. The school encourages fruit eating during the school day and this and the lack of sweets has had a positive effect on pupils' behaviour.
18. Pupils are well prepared for each stage of their school life and for their introduction to secondary education. This is because relationships in the school are effective; teachers know their pupils and staff work well as a team. There is also a comprehensive induction programme for secondary entry and effective liaison between the two institutions.
19. All pupils have the opportunity throughout their school life to participate in the choir, computer club and a range of sporting activity, including football, swimming and netball. There are social events such as fairs organised by the PTA and all Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to experience fieldwork at an outdoor pursuits centre.
20. Although curricular resources are good and the school is very clean and organized, with extensive grounds, accommodation is judged only satisfactory because classrooms are too small for the numbers of pupils and considerations of safety prevent much movement during practical and investigational activities. However, there are sufficient teachers to teach the curriculum very well and competent and caring teaching, manual and clerical assistants support them effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are well cared for, supported and guided at the school. The school has good procedures for taking pupils' views into account.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are given good personal and academic guidance, which enables them to learn with confidence.
- Child protection and health and safety procedures are good, so that children feel safe.
- Pupils know their views matter and this makes them feel valued.

Commentary

21. Nearly all parents say that their children are happy, well cared for and treated fairly and equally in a Christian ethos. Pupils say that their teachers are helpful if they have problems with their work and that they are well looked after. This reassurance has a positive effect on their learning. There are good induction procedures, which start with a pre-school toy library, so that parents and the children can get to know the teachers.
22. The school behaviour policy is very effective, so that pupils get along together harmoniously and everyone is included in activities. Teaching assistants give effective support to pupils. In each class there is a prayer at the end of the morning and afternoon and this helps pupils leave the class in a calm and considerate way. Pupils are given good personal guidance in their personal and social education lessons. Pupils' work is regularly marked, with constructive comments. Pupils are well informed about the standard of their work, because there is a thorough underlying assessment system. The older pupils have a target setting week, in which parents are also involved. Targets set in literacy and mathematics are contributing to rising standards in these subjects, but are not as well developed in other subjects.
23. There are effective health and safety procedures. The school is well maintained by an efficient caretaker. The governors help to carry out regular site inspections and appropriate risk assessments are in place. A few health and safety matters were discussed with the headteacher during the inspection and the school's response to these was positive and efficient. All staff have basic first aid training; however, the school lacks a suitable medical room. Supervision in school and in the playground is good. The school promotes healthy living effectively, with fruit for younger children and encouragement of healthy snacks. Child protection procedures are effective. Teaching and non-teaching staff are well informed about policy and procedures and keep appropriate records to monitor any welfare concerns that arise.
24. Pupils are very keen to help in the day-to-day running of their school. The school council was set up this year, so has not had time yet to be fully effective. However, it is having a positive effect. There is a prominent display in the school hall of pupils' suggestions from the first meeting. Pupils are looking forward to selecting the best schemes to develop with the budget of £700 allocated to them from the parents' association and the school. The active and willing involvement of pupils in the running of their school makes a strong contribution to their personal development. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good and effective links with parents, other schools and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents give good support to the school and to their children's learning.
- The school is welcoming to parents and communications are satisfactory.
- The governors' report to parents and the prospectus do not meet statutory requirements.

- Pupils benefit from close links with the local secondary schools.

Commentary

25. Parents are very pleased with the school, which is a popular choice in the local area. They say that their children like school, are expected to work hard, make good progress and that the school promotes good values. There was very little dissent from these positive views, although a few parents felt they would like some more information on the curriculum and about their children's progress.
26. During the inspection many parents came to watch and support their children at the Year 3 class assembly. The 'Friends of St. Nicholas' give good support to the school. They have funded improvements in the form of books and other resources. The Christmas disco they organise is a very popular family social occasion. The school gives parents good notice of school events. The reading log book suitably involves parents in reading with their children at home. Several parents help in the school; this help is welcomed and valued by the teachers. Parents demonstrate their support for education by their good levels of attendance at the autumn and summer term meetings with the teachers to discuss their children's progress. Recently learning mentors have been appointed to work with selected pupils and their parents, enabling parents to better support the work of their children in school. This promises to enhance home school links and welfare provision constructively.
27. The school is welcoming. Parents remarked that they felt they could approach the school to discuss issues and were happy with the outcomes. The school sends home regular letters, but curriculum information is limited and so some opportunities to involve parents in their children's education are missed. The annual reports on pupils' progress are good, although they would be further improved by the inclusion of targets for improvement, so that parents can give more informed support at home. The governors' report to parents is well presented in a friendly style. However, it lacks the required statutory information on national test results, pupil numbers, school security and progress on the school action plan. The prospectus does not include the results in national tests as required. The school consults parents effectively, sending out a questionnaire every alternate year, and is responsive to their suggestions.
28. Community links contribute effectively to the pupils' education. Year 4 helped to clear litter for the community. Pupils have helped to design and make a mosaic for a local play area as part of a neighbourhood regeneration project. There are good links with the two churches associated with the school; pupils visit for key festivals and the clergy visit to take some assemblies. There are frequent visitors to the school who bring a range of expertise to benefit the pupils. However, business links are underdeveloped and thus pupils miss the opportunity to see and apply the relevance of their learning to the world of work.
29. Pupils joining the school settle in quickly and induction procedures are good. However, links with local playgroups and nurseries are limited. Links with the main receiving secondary schools are very effective. Pupils have enjoyed visits to drama workshops and art exhibitions, made electrical lighting badges in a design and technology project and enjoyed working alongside a group of secondary school pupils in a computing project. Pupils receive some French lessons from a visiting secondary school teacher. Good sporting and musical links enrich the curriculum. The shared teaching, together with opportunities to visit the secondary schools for 'taster sessions', helps to build pupils' confidence and makes for a smooth transition to their next stage of education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides effective leadership. The leadership of senior staff is good. Management is good. Governance is good; statutory requirements are met apart from some minor omissions in information to parents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is very committed to the school and has high aspirations for its future development.
- Performance management is used well to support school improvement.
- The school analyses its performance well and takes the necessary action to address weaknesses through good development planning.
- The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

Commentary

30. St Nicholas puts into practice well its Christian foundation. The governing body is very supportive of the school and has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Individual governors bring a wide range of experience to their role and provide a valuable link with the local community. Their skills are put to good use in supporting the school in areas such as finance, staff recruitment and developing the school building. They also provide an appropriate level of challenge, holding the school to account for its performance. Some governors are regular visitors, meeting staff and pupils and contributing especially to the spiritual life of the school. Governors fulfil their statutory duties, apart from the minor exception related to the provision of information in the annual report to parents and the school's prospectus. The work of the governing body is successfully supported by a number of active committees.
31. The headteacher provides good and committed leadership. He has high aspirations for the future development of the school, being dedicated to the continuous raising of standards. He has led the school's recent clear focus upon improvements in literacy and numeracy, with a current emphasis on the need to improve standards in science. He is the driving force behind the school's commitment to inclusion and the importance of raising aspirations and meeting the needs of all pupils. A focus on the needs of higher attaining pupils will enable this impetus to be maintained. He is justifiably popular with pupils, parents and governors. Good quality leadership and management are also provided by the subject co-ordinators, who regularly monitor progress in their subjects and prepare and execute action plans to tackle any identified weaknesses. The senior management team meets formally on a regular basis to discuss emerging issues. The members of the senior management team corporately and individually provide good role models for other staff and pupils. The school development plan is a good reflection of the school's current needs. It identifies the need to improve results in science and to provide for the needs of higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils. Construction of the plan fully involves staff and governors at appropriate stages.

32. Performance management is used well as a mechanism to improve standards. There is a close link between the objectives set for teachers and the priorities in the school development plan. Teachers value the process and view it as a very positive contribution to their professional development. For example, there has been a clear focus on raising standards in writing throughout the school and teachers have worked well together to improve results. As a result of their efforts and the provision of relevant training, pupils are now producing written work of a good standard. As a result of an ongoing focus upon teaching and learning, the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently good and better.
33. There is good analysis of the school's performance and identification of things the school needs to do to improve. The headteacher regularly monitors planning and teaching and scrutinises pupils' work.
34. Co-ordinators have a good understanding of their subjects' strengths and weaknesses. They have release time from classes, related to the school's current development priorities. This time is used partly to audit resources and consider planning, and also to monitor and support teaching. Self-evaluation is a central part of the school's ethos and the results are put to good use in informing the school's strategic planning. The school is aware that its appropriate focus on literacy has improved standards but has delayed improvements in mathematics and science. With this knowledge, there is a current clear focus on raising standards in these two subjects. The school has good strategies to support new teachers.
35. The management of pupils with special educational needs is very good overall. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and has a very good understanding of the needs of pupils. She is well informed and liaises closely with support staff and a specialist teacher who works part-time. The school works well with a number of support agencies to ensure the needs of pupils are met. A significant factor in the very good provision is the depth of information available to class teachers and their use of it in planning lessons. The needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language are identified well. Good, clear and focused support is provided for them. The school has recently identified its gifted and talented pupils and is enthusiastic about this area of provision with plans for further action.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	586,158
Total expenditure	608,693
Expenditure per pupil	2,081

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	66,081
Balance carried forward to the next year	43,546

36. Financial planning and monitoring are effective and involve all relevant parties, including the local education authority, where appropriate. The budget reflects the school's needs well and there is a good regard for the principles of best value. Whilst the current budget surplus is greater than the recommended five per cent, governors have good and clearly formulated plans for expenditure, including the ongoing costs of improving the school building.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

37. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enter the reception class at the beginning of the year during which they become five. Many have limited experience at nursery or play groups and most enter school with low levels of attainment in all areas of learning within the Foundation Stage curriculum. The children are encouraged to develop their independence in a variety of personal, social and learning situations. Adults' expectations in the classroom are high and children respond well. Wherever learning is taking place, it is carefully monitored by the teacher and individual assessments are made and recorded, so that progress is identified and future learning is well planned in all the areas of learning. Children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make good progress. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very well planned and shared effectively with all adults who contribute to teaching and learning in the reception class. There has been a considerable reorganisation of the reception year; progress since the previous inspection is good. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff and the children are very good.
- Opportunities are used well to develop children's independence.
- Children make good progress towards achieving the standards expected at the end of their reception year, even though they were well below average when they started school.

Commentary

38. The children are already, even though they have only been in school for a term, developing a mature and responsible attitude towards each other and within the classroom. They are sensitive and consider each other when they work within a group, sharing their ideas and playing well alongside each other. All activities and tasks provide good opportunities to develop these aspects of their learning, so that specific skills can be enhanced within working groups. The children are very confident and secure about the routines of the classroom. They line up quietly, dress themselves for outdoor play and respond well to rhymes and sounds which indicate a change of focus or activity.
39. The staff have worked hard to ensure that children have every opportunity to express their ideas and build up the confidence of those children who are of quieter disposition to contribute to discussions and work within groups, where they contribute well. Teaching is very good; children are achieving well but below the expected levels by the time they leave the reception class.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good.
- Children work hard and are developing their language skills well.
- Very good use is made of role play to develop the children's language.

Commentary

40. The children are lively and enthusiastic about the stories and rhymes which begin and end the day. They look forward with eager anticipation to identifying key characters and are very willing to describe who and what their role is in the story. Teaching is very good; teachers provide very well planned and good opportunities within every session to develop language and use the children's contributions and ideas to extend the discussion. Children listen very carefully to the different letter sounds and are eager to offer their suggestions, so that they can identify objects which begin with the same initial sounds. They use words and phrases to extend their ideas and define how they can solve a problem or build a shelter for their car. Their knowledge of initial sounds and blending sounds is good. They use picture clues well to tell a story and are beginning to develop simple reading strategies through combining the words and the sounds they have learnt. They are enthusiastic readers and enjoy sharing their books with parents.
41. The range of activities and tasks is very good and children respond well to the interesting and motivating sessions. Lessons are very well planned and language is central to the whole of the curriculum. Children who find this area difficult are well supported through appropriate activities and the very good use of individual adult support. The different tools they use to make letter patterns and the good use of the computer to consolidate key words and sounds assist their learning well. The well-established routines and good use of picture clues help the children to complete a range of independent tasks, as well as working with an adult. The interesting jingles and rhymes which are used to help children structure their time all contribute to the progress children make. The children are purposeful in their attitudes. From a very low baseline, children make good progress. They are able to identify their progress and describe well what they have learnt during the lesson. They are valued and their achievements recognised, so that they are eager to move to the next steps. However, the majority are unlikely to achieve the standard expected in this area of learning at the end of the reception year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good.

- Resources are used imaginatively and promote the children's mathematical language very well.

Commentary

42. Lessons are well planned and take into account the different abilities of the children, so that all are engaged and enjoy their number activities. Play activities enhance children's counting skills well. The home corner stimulates children to count and match utensils to those who are invited to tea. Children are encouraged carefully to recognise patterns and match colours whilst counting out cups, saucers and plates. The classroom and external areas assist mathematical development and a very good range of independent activities extends children's mathematical skills well. The activities are very well planned, so that individual achievement is noted and future learning activity is based on the progress children make.
43. Teaching is very good because of the well-planned lessons and good use of resources. The very good adult support in the classroom enables all pupils to succeed and celebrate their achievement. Children are enthusiastic about numbers and relish matching numbers to coins and then using their coins to purchase items at the toyshop. Role play is used well in children's mathematical development. Teachers promote interesting scenarios, using the good resources to create a post office. Children assume postal worker roles and use their mathematical and literacy skills to make purchases, write letters and post their cards and presents. More able children are counting confidently to ten. They recognise and add together one and two pence coins. Mathematical development permeates many areas of the curriculum and children are encouraged to use mathematical words carefully and accurately as they make models and create patterns from beads and shapes. Children are making good progress. However, because children enter school with low levels of attainment, the majority are unlikely to achieve the Early Learning Goal in this area by the end of the year.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in this area is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use innovative and engaging activities to fire the children's enthusiasm.
- The children are fully involved; they show a vitality and interest in the world around them.

Commentary

44. The reception classroom and the adjacent area are vibrant areas for learning. They are managed effectively to provide a very good range of learning opportunities for the children. All activities are well constructed so that children can initiate their own understanding of the world around them.
45. Teaching is very good; the children are lively and fully involved in the very good rapport between themselves and the puppets the teacher often uses to develop and

engage their interest in an investigation about different types of toys. They are happy to be 'finder-outers' and report their findings to 'Freda Frog', who receives their drawings about their discoveries and different types of toys and shares them well with the class. The excellent range of resources based on different types and ages of toys builds on the very good understanding, knowledge and vocabulary children have acquired from previous activities. Children have regular access to ICT to support their learning in a number of activities. They are confident in their use of computers and can use the mouse effectively to navigate their way through simple programs.

46. The children engage in their learning very well because they listen carefully to the interesting and intensive dialogue between the teacher and the puppet. The innovative use of short bursts of activities, where all children have the opportunity to explore and experiment, keeps them involved and provides very good teaching and learning opportunities. Their discussion about a range of Victorian games translates into the discovery of play without electronic games. The very good introduction to scientific language is used as children explore a range of objects which float or sink, with the comment "my prediction is that it will float" and record their findings on a simple but effective chart. The innovation and clear links within a well planned theme present children with constant opportunities which link well to other areas of learning. Children have confidence to use their skills and develop their understanding of the world around them but, because of their low starting point, are likely to be below expected levels when entering Year 1.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, within a constrained environment for physical development.
- Good use is made of the indoor space outside the classroom to provide a variety of different activities.
- The provision for outdoor play is unsatisfactory and inhibits children's physical development.

Commentary

47. Children's physical development is promoted through using a good range of interesting and small toys in an exciting, well set out area, both within and outside the classroom. Teaching is good. The themes that are present in every learning opportunity allow the children to explore and build various large structures and engage in a good range of role play activities. They are lively and enthusiastic when using the garage, the train track and the dolls' house. All adults focus on a specific skill-building activity to make it easy for every child to learn through play during the session. Their manipulative skills are encouraged through innovative and different ways to explore shapes, materials and mark-making tools such as pencils or brushes. Children respond very well and use their growing vocabulary to describe their efforts and explore imaginary situations with each other. Fine motor skills are developed well.
48. Outdoor play is very limited but children enjoy the regular sessions and teaching is good even when the whole class is based within a confined area. Children listen well, but do not have the opportunity to develop running, jumping and ball skills to best advantage. The bikes and carts are used enthusiastically but children are not challenged to think about safety and manipulating the carts along an interesting route. Learning opportunities related to other areas are limited, and the area does not serve to stimulate the children's imaginations. They are not likely to achieve the Early Learning Goal in this area.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in this area is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children can use interesting and varied resources to explore and experiment.
- Children use role play well in many situations to assist both their imagination and literacy skills.
- Children sing well.

Commentary

49. Teaching is very good in this area; the broad range of approaches and activities enables children to explore and experiment with a very good range of materials and textures. As children engage in painting, drawing or experimenting with various printing tools, adults, both in a group and as individuals, extend children's ideas and offer different ranges of possibilities. Children are positive and enthusiastic in their

response. They organise themselves well and prepare themselves and their materials efficiently for water and painting activities. They dress themselves independently and take pride in their achievements. They are adventurous in their efforts and recognise the limitations of different tools and textures as they experiment and attempt to produce interesting pieces of work. Their attempts at self-portraits are good. They are becoming more aware of different textures and relationships between different materials.

50. Highly focused modelling activities provide children with the initial ideas and much creative development in very well managed learning opportunities. Children are encouraged to share in jingles and rhymes, which they do with enthusiasm, and they are given time to listen and share their music-making ideas within a group. They are interested and enjoy sharing these skills. As is the case with all areas of learning, results are assessed and individual progress is recorded well to plan the next steps in children's learning in this area. Children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make very good progress and are well supported in this area of learning. Despite this progress they are not on course to achieve the learning goals expected of them in this area of learning.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made very good progress since the last inspection.
- Teachers give effective priority to speaking and listening and engender a love of reading.
- Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of technical vocabulary and basic skills are taught well.
- Teachers encourage pupils' writing very well and there are good examples across a range of genres.
- The subject is very well led and managed by a hardworking and enthusiastic co-ordinator.

Commentary

51. The school has successfully addressed all of the issues raised in the previous inspection: low achievers have been targeted; resources are much improved, including the library; differences in attainment between boys and girls have been resolved; planning as a result of rigorous assessment is thorough and lessons now meet the needs and interests of the majority of pupils. As a result of this progress, in 2004 national test results in Year 2 were above average, while those of pupils in Year 6 were average. However, compared with similar schools, both groups of pupils performed very well. Variations in attainment over the year groups are due to the fluctuating number of pupils with special educational needs.

52. As a result of the good teaching and learning throughout the school in speaking and listening, reading and writing, pupils, who enter Year 1 with standards below national expectations, achieve well. They reach average standards by Year 2 and above average by Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well relative to their abilities because of specialist individual support, as well as good mainstream classroom support. Pupils learning English as an additional language achieve well because their needs are identified well. All pupils are well motivated to learn because of the probing questions and continual encouragement to experiment with words and use language for a variety of uses: to infer and predict; to reason and qualify; to recall, maintain and project. Teachers plan in great detail and so time is used well. They have high expectations of the pupils and support them enthusiastically as they discuss a wide variety of well-chosen literature. Interesting activities match the range of pupils' ability and pupils' sensitivity to language is enhanced. As a result, pupils respond well to atmosphere, character, and the nuances of particular words. Indeed, pupils read regularly and enthuse about their reading both at home and in school; all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, have a variety of word building skills and all read aloud with degrees of expression because they engage well with the text.
53. Grammar is taught well; teachers are good role models, using Standard English well. Work is consolidated well so that by Year 2 the majority of pupils are confident in writing simple sentences using time connectives and by Year 6 pupils write complex sentences and paragraphs, using a variety of adjectives and adverbs. There are good examples of extended writing and pupils write on a regular basis for different purposes and audiences. Evidence of personal and imaginative writing was seen in the striking metaphors constructed, for example, by Year 5 pupils, such as,
"The evil person's heart is a whirling dark vortex sucking up all joy and hope."
54. The co-ordinator has a very good overview of the subject, its marking and its assessment. She tracks pupils' progress and works alongside staff to identify the focus of future teaching. For example, teachers have successfully focused on developing the writing skills of pupils, providing opportunities in lessons in a number of subjects, to enable pupils to write well. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning, pupils' work and observes lessons. She also leads staff discussion and moderates pupils' writing levels. Marking is particularly supportive and constructive, so that pupils know from written and verbal comments how they can improve and when and where progress will be checked. There are well planned opportunities for pupils to use ICT to develop their language skills, for example, using word processing skills to extend and develop writing.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. As part of the school's development priority there are planned opportunities to apply literacy skills across the curriculum and it is done well. For example, in Year 2 pupils noted the features of a recipe, while Year 4 pupils analysed a piece of text about Roman writing tablets to extract the features of good instructional writing. Year 4 pupils also wrote a formal letter of complaint to the council after an environmental visit to a nearby area and Year 6 pupils produced a leaflet on a scientific experiment with micro-organisms.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- There is good support for pupils who need extra help with their learning.
- Resources are good and lessons are well planned to use them effectively.
- Marking of pupils' work is very good and pupils' progress is continually assessed.
- A small number of higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they should.

Commentary

56. Currently, standards in Year 2 are in line with expectations; in Year 6 they are above those expected for pupils of this age. National test results have fluctuated over previous years but are above those of the national trend since the time of the last report. Results in 2004 were above those in similar schools at the end of Year 2 and are in line with those in similar schools at the end of Year 6. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. The school has focused on raising standards and is tracking pupils' progress well. A small number of higher attaining pupils are not reaching the standards expected of them and the school is beginning to take steps to improve their achievement and raise their levels of attainment, through specific tasks and small group teaching.
57. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and tasks appropriate to different abilities are well managed in all lessons. A key feature of the good progress is the rigorous attitude to the marking of pupils' work. Comments and discussions are well focused on how pupils can improve and complete their work accurately, using skills and knowledge they have learnt earlier. Assessment procedures are very good and accurate records are the basis for defining key skills and progress in lessons. Pupils are aware of their own personal targets and, within a group, strive to achieve both their own and the group's target. Their work is well presented and accurate. Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with special educational needs to help them to improve expected standards in number and problem solving.
58. Teachers promote the good use of a mathematical vocabulary through challenging questioning techniques. In the mental and oral sessions, pupils respond well, particularly in Years 5 and 6, where they use mathematical vocabulary well. The innovative use of whiteboards increases the pace of the lessons and where there is good or very good teaching pupils are constantly challenged to exceed their own expectations and complete their tasks quickly and accurately. A very good lesson in Year 5 focused on key skills, working with large numbers and applying them to problems. Pupils worked well together and provided each other with support and ideas so that all made good progress. In Year 4, the rapid pace and keen responses to a range of challenging questions ensure pupils make good progress and consolidate their learning well. Where lessons are varied in their approach, pupils provide good oral contributions to an interesting range of problem solving techniques. Where teaching is not as strong and is satisfactory, the pace of lessons is not as dynamic.

The more able pupils have too few opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to explore mathematical relationships and solve problems.

59. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The recently appointed co-ordinator has a very good action plan to develop the subject more effectively. Pupils' progress is monitored and the data analysed carefully to track individual progress. Planning is a strength and individual lesson plans are shared, so that good support for individual pupils can be provided. Resources are good; however, the use of ICT to support learning is in its early stages and not yet fully utilised to best advantage in mathematics. Plans for introducing new resources are good and resources are used efficiently and support pupils' learning successfully, especially in mental and oral number activities. The curriculum is well planned so that pupils can use their previous learning to enhance and apply their skills to measurement, shapes and data handling as they move through the school. The amount of detailed analysis of teaching and learning in classrooms is good and has had a good effect the quality of teaching so that the subject is taught with confidence and raises the interest of the pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

60. There are good opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills, Younger pupils use their counting skills in physical education and music, while pupils throughout the school use their measuring and number skills in design and technology to construct models and make their money containers. They are used successfully in science and geography to collect and use data well to measure results against pupils' predictions.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons have a clear emphasis on investigative and practical science.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes, take pride in their work and achieve well.
- Good teaching is leading to improvement in the subject.
- Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

Commentary

61. The 2004 national test results in science were well below average by Year 6. Teacher assessments indicate above average standards by Year 2. There was a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs in Year 6, who found the language content of the tests difficult. A detailed analysis of all the questions has been undertaken by the co-ordinator, with a clear focus on improvements during the current year. Work seen indicates that pupils are working at appropriate levels throughout the school and that standards are average in Year 2 and Year 6. Since children have a low starting point as they enter the school, this represents good achievement. The number of pupils reaching the higher national curriculum levels has risen, but remains below the national average. It is clear that the school's focus on literacy has improved standards in reading and writing, but improvements in science

are taking longer to materialise. The better results at Year 2 can be maintained through Years 3 to 6.

62. Teaching and learning are good overall, with consistently good teaching throughout the school. Teachers know the pupils well and relate particularly well to those pupils with special educational needs. Teachers interact well with pupils, using questioning and discussion well to clarify and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, for example, in a Year 5 lesson looking at ways to measure air. As the result of the teacher's probing questions pupils were able to explain how air could be replaced by liquids and solids and to measure the equivalent volume. Lessons are planned well and there are good relationships between pupils and between adults and the pupils. The outcomes of the assessment of pupils' progress are beginning to be used well to provide a sharper focus on what pupils need to learn next. From the beginning of this school year assessments are undertaken at the end of each unit of work and related to national curriculum levels. Pupils' work is marked regularly but teachers' comments do not always give pupils sufficient information about what they have done well or on possible improvement which could be made.
63. Strategies are being put into place to address weaknesses. The content of the programme of work for pupils has been amended. Commercial teaching materials are used alongside materials prepared by teachers. This enables teachers to target those pupils who are close to reaching the next national curriculum level and to provide them with appropriate learning opportunities. There is an increased emphasis on investigational work and teachers and pupils are becoming familiar with considerations of fair testing in order to evaluate the results. Classroom areas are small and do not lend themselves to investigational work. Teachers overcome this by organizing group investigations and effectively sharing the outcomes with the whole class.
64. Lower attaining pupils, those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are supported well by teaching assistants and progress well. However there is too little variety in the tasks set, which means that higher attaining pupils are not always fully challenged. Pupils are often given task sheets to support their recording and, while this helps average and lower attainers, the format limits opportunities for pupils to write independently and at greater length. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, with a clear capacity for further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection.
- Pupils are successfully working at the appropriate programmes of work.
- Activities are well matched to pupils' interests and abilities.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

65. Resources have been much enhanced since the previous inspection by the installation of a well laid out computer suite and the purchase of good quality hardware and software. The subject now has a high profile and pupils are given suitable opportunities to develop their basic skills across all aspects of the subject in the classroom, in their weekly sessions in the computer suite and during activity sessions during two lunchtimes. Staff are keen to make progress with the subject and because they have the necessary knowledge and skills, much progress has been made in a short period of time.
66. Standards are now average in both Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils follow a comprehensive programme of work, which covers all appropriate national curricular levels. Year 1 pupils label and classify objects; Year 3 use simulations to make and test predictions; Year 5 work with databases and Year 6 manage spreadsheets. This work is planned for three levels of difficulty to ensure pupils have adequate support and opportunities for success. The programme is kept under constant review, pupils' work is informally assessed and the school is working towards the introduction of individual targets.
67. Pupils are now achieving well because teaching and learning are consistently good. More computers are soon to be installed. However, because staff have very good classroom management skills they have been able to use the existing resources well. They have also planned well to use the new machines as soon as possible, to support learning in a number of subject areas. Staff give very clear instructions throughout lessons, demonstrating computer use confidently so that pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers also provide written materials for memory prompts and set tasks which provide different degrees of challenge. For example, pupils work at different levels of software, use a variety of tools, or complete longer and more sophisticated searches. As a result, pupils are engaged and supported as they work through a project and their skills are consolidated and extended. They are also frequently asked to reflect on a comparison between computer learning and more traditional methods. Their understanding of suitability for task is thus becoming more refined. Pupils enjoy working on the computers. They are confident and well motivated and take good responsibility for learning when working independently. Also, because they are encouraged to work collaboratively in pairs, this makes a good contribution to their personal and social development.
68. The subject leader has a clear and realistic view of the subject's strengths and weaknesses and has correctly identified future priorities. The curriculum is good; she is piloting Lancashire's checklist to evaluate progress and working closely with the high school to help pupils acquire the skills needed when they transfer to it.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. There are many good examples of word processing across the curriculum. In addition, pupils regularly use the Internet for research across a range of subjects. In Year 2 pupils create pictures in the style of the famous artist Mondrian. In Year 3 a simulation exercise introduces them to the use of co-ordinates to describe position. In Year 5 use of a database also helps pupils understand food classifications.

HUMANITIES

History and geography work was sampled. Because the school provides denominational religious education the subject does not form a part of this inspection.

70. In history and geography there is every indication from pupils' work that standards are broadly average. In the one **geography** lesson seen, in Year 6, pupils were studying the formation of river deltas. Teaching was good and there were good working relationships between pupils. They were encouraged to contribute effectively in understanding how deltas are formed. Subject planning is closely based on the national guidance for units of work with appropriate use of photographs and other resources related to the localities being studied. In the **history** lesson seen in Year 4, pupils looked at how the Romans organised entertainment and considered "what it would be like to be a gladiator." The teacher used additional resources well, including a video clip and the opportunity for pupils to make gladiator helmets. Because of the teacher's good knowledge of the subject teaching and learning were good; pupils displayed positive attitudes to learning and behaved very well.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, design technology, music and physical education were sampled.

71. No lessons were seen in **art and design** and one lesson was observed in **design and technology**. Evidence indicates that a wide range of experiences is provided in each area. Displays show that pupils use an appropriate range of media for both two- and three-dimensional work, suggesting that they follow an appropriate curriculum. The displays include references to the work of famous artists such as Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Picasso. In the ICT suite pupils have produced good work based on the work of Matisse and Mondrian. Pupils have enjoyed workshops with artists visiting the school through the local council's 'Creative Arts Project'. Pupils are enthusiastic about their design and technology tasks and discuss with a degree of confidence the processes required to complete a model or article successfully. Pupils in Year 2 are proud of their moving vehicles and demonstrate clearly how they have designed their car and used various materials to construct their vehicle. They have learnt about axles and wheels and recognised how they could improve their design and the difference between their original and finished vehicle.

72. No lessons were observed in **music** but singing in assembly and during choir practice revealed pupils' obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment for the subject. They sang melodies and two-part harmonies confidently with very good pitch, rhythm and dynamics. Year 6 pupils were particularly keen to describe their use of percussion instruments to accompany their singing and they were able to recall with relish previous Christmas musical productions and class assemblies. They were also very proud to have sung in church and to have entertained local senior citizens with their music. The school has purchased a commercial scheme to assist with lessons and audio resources now include music from different times and cultures. The school also organises visits from Lancashire's music service so that pupils can experience vocal, brass, jazz and string ensembles.

73. Two lessons were observed in **physical education**. In a good lesson in Year 2, pupils responded well to the interesting focus on a circus theme and provided high quality

movement to translate into a performance as a whole group to entertain each other. The teacher was very aware and involved the support assistant well to encourage reluctant pupils to contribute to the lesson. The good use of music stimulated the pupils well and they worked hard to represent clowns, jugglers and prancing horses in the circus ring. The lesson demonstrated continuity where pupils used all their skills and body awareness to complete the variety of tasks that were asked of them. Games skills are planned well, and pupils have the opportunity to develop knowledge of the skills required in a variety of games. They are taught in smaller groups; both boys and girls undertake a variety of sports. The girls' football team achieves well. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to learn to swim and most achieve the expected national standard by Year 6. The school fosters a keen interest in a range of out-of-school activities and acclaims pupils' successes where they achieve in individual sporting activities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This area of the curriculum was sampled.

74. The school's personal, social and health education programme promotes confidence and responsibility, a healthy, safer lifestyle and relationships which are effective enough to respect differences. This programme is further developed into exciting citizenship projects, which ensure pupils' understanding of their rights and responsibilities in adult society.
75. Pupils are encouraged to be active citizens by environmental projects such as litter collections, neighbourhood clean-ups and the creation and maintenance of diverse habitats in the school grounds, such as meadow pasture, hedging and woodland for investigational purposes. Pupils also entertain senior citizens with their singing and music and experience the wider community when they collect for particular national and world charities. Election to the school council develops political understanding effectively and pupils appreciate democracy when their chosen delegate represents each class's views, including their own. The management of a budget by the school council and the effect of spending decisions also enhance their economic understanding.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

