

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

South Ockendon

LEA area: Thurrock

Unique reference number: 115181

Headteacher: Ms K Golden

Lead inspector: Mrs S E Hall

Dates of inspection: 13th – 16th June 2005

Inspection number: 267045

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	326
School address:	Daiglen Drive South Ockendon Essex
Postcode:	RM15 5RP
Telephone number:	01708 853000
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Sister Mary Lyons
Date of previous inspection:	11 th January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School is in the urban area of South Ockendon in Essex. With 326 pupils, it is larger than average. Mobility in and out of the school is now below average, but three or four years ago a sizeable number of families, particularly of African heritage, relocated to the area from London. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the average. Census information indicates that the socio-economic context of the school is below average, particularly in the proportion of adults with higher education. Almost one-seventh of pupils are from a minority ethnic heritage, largely African. Most of these pupils speak their mother tongue and English with equal skill but there are seven pupils identified as being at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average, with most having moderate learning difficulties. Six pupils have a statement of special educational need. On entry to the school children have skills that, whilst variable, are largely average for their age. The school is part of the Leadership Development Strategy – a behaviour and attendance project – and receives support from The Children’s Fund. In 2003 the school received Healthy Schools and Investors in People awards.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21750	Mrs S E Hall	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Science Art and design English as an additional language
9843	Ms S Drake	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
32168	Mrs A Keen	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology Design and technology The Foundation Stage
31742	Mrs J Marsden	<i>Team inspector</i>	English Geography History Physical education
22546	Mr J Parsons	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics Citizenship Music Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education. There are strengths in the pastoral care of pupils, but the school has been slower than it might have been to move forward in making improvements in the quality of education offered. Standards are currently average for the age of the pupils, and the large majority achieve satisfactorily. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as is the overall quality of leadership, management, governance and value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher is good, and she has a clear and accurate understanding of strategic development and what the school needs to do to improve further.
- Relationships are very good; pupils behave well in class and have positive attitudes to work.
- Staff do not use assessment information well enough to provide a consistently high level of challenge in all activities and, particularly, for more able pupils.
- The school's strong pastoral commitment to pupils ensures that they feel happy and valued.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good and they achieve well.
- The curriculum lacks balance in the time allocated to subjects and there is not enough emphasis on investigative and problem-solving activities.
- The roles of subject co-ordinators are underdeveloped, and monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school lack rigour in identifying what needs to be improved.
- Standards in science are slightly above average.

There has been satisfactory overall improvement since the previous inspection. The school has made good improvement in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). There has been satisfactory improvement in the professional development of staff and school development planning. However, there has not been enough improvement in the use of assessment information to assist teaching or in monitoring and evaluation procedures.

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	C	D	D
Mathematics	C	B	C	C
Science	D	B	A	A

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

The makeup of the school intake has changed since the previous inspection, with several families, largely of African heritage, re-locating to the area. These pupils often do better in school than many of the other pupils, although as yet the school does not have detailed enough information to identify the progress made by different ethnic groups over time.

Achievement in the school is **satisfactory**. Children enter the school with a wide range of ability. This varies from year to year but is currently average overall. Most have average skills in their personal and social development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical skills, but are below average in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative and physical development. Inspection judgements are that standards are average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, and in Year 6 in English and mathematics. Standards in

science are slightly above average across the school. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, although some higher attaining pupils could achieve more. Overall, pupils do not currently achieve as well as national tests suggest, as there are relatively few working at the higher levels. National tests show that the achievement of girls has regularly been below that of boys in recent years. The school has introduced positive strategies to make more demands upon girls, and there was little inspection evidence of such differences in achievement.

Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **good**. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and school life. Behaviour is good in class, where it is well managed, but that of some older boys can be boisterous at lunch and breaktimes. Attendance is well above average and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. The quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**, but very mixed. Teaching is generally better for the younger than the older pupils, although pupils in Year 4 are taught particularly effectively. Throughout the school, staff have good relationships with pupils and encourage and manage them well. Teaching assistants and staff working with pupils with SEN provide good support. The overall planning of activities is broadly satisfactory, but it does not consistently identify activities to meet the needs of groups of pupils who make different rates of progress. While average and lower attaining pupils learn at least satisfactorily and those with SEN learn well, some more able pupils could make more progress. There is much teaching in Years 3 to 6 that lacks dynamism and some that is unsatisfactory.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Staff plan conscientiously, for mixed age classes as well as for others. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. However, from Years 1 to 6 there is not a good balance between the time allocated to the teaching of all subjects. Few aspects of the curriculum are innovative and stimulating, and staff do not make a big enough feature of practical learning or investigative activities. The accommodation and resources are good overall. The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory, although lunchtime arrangements are not always well organised and the general monitoring of both personal and academic progress is often too informal. Partnerships with parents and the community are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall leadership, management and governance of the school are **satisfactory**. The leadership of the headteacher is good. Since her appointment she has developed a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve the quality of education. She has worked hard to help long-serving staff to identify areas for improvement, though there have not always been advances in teaching in some parts of the school where staff have not readily embraced the necessary changes. Governance of the school is satisfactory and governors meet the statutory requirements placed upon them. While supportive, governors are not always fully aware of the weaknesses in provision or of the manner in which they can help bring about improvement. Day-to-day management of the school is efficient, but the role of subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped and the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school lacks rigour and is unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' and pupils' views of the school are **satisfactory** overall. Several parents have a strongly held perception that behaviour in school is poor. In the opinion of the inspection team this is not accurately based, and the school has much work to do in the community to counteract some ill-informed opinion. The headteacher and staff work successfully to make the school an inclusive place where all pupils are welcomed. Parents appear at times to confuse good pastoral care with a

'soft' approach to discipline. Pupils like being in school, although some older pupils indicate that at times this is not stimulating.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Make better use of assessment information to provide consistently challenging activities for all pupils and particularly those of higher ability.
- Ensure there is a better balance of time allocated to all subjects and that there is more emphasis on practical learning and investigative activities.
- Extend the role of senior staff and subject co-ordinators in the direct monitoring of teaching and learning in subjects for which they hold responsibility, and ensure there is rigour in all such procedures.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve **satisfactorily**. Overall standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are average for the age of the pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with SEN achieve well in relation to their ability.
- Higher attaining pupils in some classes in Years 3 to 6 do not achieve all they can.
- Standards in science are slightly above average at the end of Years 2 and 6.

Commentary

1. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are currently largely average for their age, as at the time of the previous inspection. However, assessment information indicates that initial skills vary quite widely and in some recent years have been below average. Currently, children have average skills in their personal and social development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical skills, but their creative and physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world are often below average. Children make good progress in the Nursery and broadly satisfactory progress in Reception. Children achieve satisfactorily overall, and by the time they enter Year 1 standards are at the level expected for this age. Some Reception children could achieve more.

Key Stage 1

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.5 (16.0)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.6 (14.4)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.0 (16.2)	16.2 (16.3)

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

2. In the national tests in 2004, pupils in Year 2 attained standards that were above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics when compared with those of all schools nationally. When compared with those of schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals, standards were above average in reading, average in writing and below average in mathematics. In the previous year standards were largely average. There has been no consistent trend in standards over the last few years.

Key Stage 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.6 (26.7)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.0 (28.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.1 (29.9)	28.6 (28.6)

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

3. In the national tests in 2004, pupils in Year 6 attained standards that were below average in English, average in mathematics and well above average in science, when compared both with all schools and with those with similar features. In the previous year, standards were well above average in mathematics and science and average in English when compared with those of similar schools. Standards have been at least average over several years.

4. Over recent times the standards attained by boys have been considerably higher than those of girls. In Year 2 in 2004 the overall performance of boys in reading, writing and mathematics was above that of girls, as it has been in each of the last five years. In Year 6, boys have outperformed girls in four of the last five years. This is the opposite of the national picture. A factor identified by some parents is that girls have virtually automatic entry to the local girls' school but that boys have to fight hard to gain the few places available at what is perceived to be the best local boys' school. Because of this, boys may be motivated to try harder and parents to support them more in their work. Staff have also identified that some families have lower aspirations for girls than for boys, partially linked to traditional family roles and local employment opportunities. The school has put in place positive approaches to ensure that girls are fully involved in discussions and do not simply play a passive role in class. Inspectors found that when pupils are well taught there is no significant variation in the standards currently achieved. However, where pupils are not well taught, as exemplified in a mixed Year 3 / 4 class, some girls offer little to discussions and remain peripheral during activities.

5. Inspection findings are that overall standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 6, as at the previous inspection. Standards in English are average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Speaking and listening skills are improving because of a school-wide focus on this area. Standards in reading are generally average. However, skills in writing are not as well developed. Because of this the school has allocated additional time to the teaching of English. Standards are average in mathematics throughout the school. Whilst standards in science are slightly above average, they are not at quite such a high level as reflected in national tests because not all pupils have good enough skills in planning and conducting investigative and experimental activities. These skills are not always measured in national tests and currently they lag behind the pupils' understanding of factual areas of science.

6. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, as in the previous inspection. However, there are variations in the achievement of pupils as a result of the uneven quality of teaching across the school. Pupils achieve very well in Year 4 and consistently well in Year 2. At times, however, especially in a mixed Year 3 / 4 class and occasionally in Year 5, pupils do not achieve all they could.

7. Pupils with SEN achieve well because they are effectively supported by teachers and by well-trained support staff. This has had a positive impact on standards in recent years, as the lower attaining pupils are now generally doing well in relation to their abilities. Average attaining pupils achieve at least satisfactorily. National tests show that a good proportion of pupils achieved the average levels in assessments but that relatively few achieved at the higher levels. While higher attaining pupils generally achieve satisfactorily, some could achieve more if sufficiently challenged. The small number of pupils at the early stages of speaking English are well supported and achieve as well as other groups of pupils. There are indicators that some of the pupils of African heritage achieve better than their white peers. However, assessment information to track the achievement of different ethnic groups over time is still at a relatively early stage.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have **good** attitudes towards school and work, and they mostly behave well. All aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **good**. Attendance levels are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy being at school and they concentrate well on their work.
- The school operates as a happy, harmonious and orderly community, where very good relationships abound.
- Strong messages of thoughtfulness and respect underpin the life of the school.
- The school's persistent action has led to very good levels of attendance and punctuality.

Commentary

8. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good, as they were at the previous inspection. Every pupil spoken with during the inspection said that they were happy at the school, finding other pupils and staff friendly and helpful. Almost every parent who responded to the questionnaire or was spoken to agreed. Pupils arrive with smiling faces and in good time in the morning, swiftly organise themselves and settle to work. The youngest children quickly learn the routines of school life, follow instructions well and grow in independence. Throughout the school pupils listen well to explanations, ask sensible questions, sustain concentration and enjoy learning. However, in some classes pupils take a long time actually getting down to written work, spending much time 'thinking' or writing the date and heading rather than recording their thoughts. They can be quite chatty and, unless well managed, have a tendency to talk over the teacher. There is good participation in clubs, and pupils are very eager to be helpful.

9. Responses to the questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting indicate that a significant minority of parents and older pupils have concerns about behaviour in the school. Outside, where older pupils in particular have a large amount of space to spread themselves, they can be very lively, but behaviour overall is good and a calm, well-organised atmosphere pervades the school. There have been no exclusions in recent years, which is an improvement on the time of the previous inspection, when behaviour management and recording of incidents were becoming increasingly consistent. Classes establish their own rules; the school has recently reviewed its behaviour policy, and the introduction of 'learning zones', in which pupils' attitudes and behaviour are directly related to learning, is proving to be an effective tool. Pupils are invited to consider their actions in a mature manner and, after doing so, generally choose to modify their behaviour in a suitable way.

10. Very good relationships lie behind the good quality behaviour. Pupils of all ages and a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds enjoy each other's company and treat each other very well. This is a truly harmonious community. Pupils are very friendly and also form good relationships with adults, so that many lessons proceed in a good-humoured atmosphere. Pupils confirm that bullying is a rare occurrence and they are confident that incidents would be dealt with effectively. Playground 'buddies' help with this, encouraging pupils to think about what is happening and to develop strategies to improve things.

11. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility. The Catholic ethos of the school is very apparent throughout the day, with strong messages given through assemblies, displays and the good role models that most staff provide for pupils. The current theme for reflection is making choices, with pupils showing a mature understanding of, for instance, how laughing at others can be hurtful. In a very good lesson for Year 4 pupils about world poverty and the forthcoming meeting of G8 leaders, pupils were quickly able to relate the song 'Heal the World' to highly relevant instances of how they could make a personal difference. Pupils are very generous with charitable fundraising; they know that in many parts of the world children go hungry and receive no education, but they also know that other countries, as well as Britain, have a rich

cultural heritage. They clearly enjoyed the Poi juggling day and can talk about its being a Maori tradition. They study a variety of religions and have a good supply of multicultural books in the library. They are well prepared for playing a full, positive part in their community.

12. Attendance levels in the current year have been sustained at the well above average levels of 2003/4, which is a significant achievement and a big improvement since the time of the last inspection, when attendance was below average. The school works in good partnership with the education welfare officer to follow up unexplained absence or late arrivals, and the great majority of parents play their part by ensuring their children attend school regularly.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (95.7%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.2	School data	0.1
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **satisfactory** overall. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Overall the curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **satisfactory**, as are links with parents and the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning, whilst very variable, are **satisfactory** overall. Assessment procedures are **satisfactory** but the use of information to inform planning is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers do not make good enough use of assessment information to plan work to provide a consistent level of challenge, especially for higher attaining pupils.
- Teaching in Year 4 is very good.
- Too much teaching in some classes in Years 3 to 6 is undemanding and occasionally unsatisfactory.
- Teachers use teaching assistants effectively, encourage pupils, and manage behaviour well.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 60 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	8 (13%)	20 (33%)	30 (50%)	2 (3%)	0	0

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

13. Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory overall. Teaching in the Nursery is good. Nursery staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of children of this age and provide an effective mix of activities to move the children's learning forward in all areas of their early learning. Good use is made of outdoor play areas to promote social and physical skills. Teaching in Reception classes is broadly satisfactory. Staff are warmly supportive of children but do not always make best use of time to provide structured play activities with a specific purpose, and some teaching does not make enough demands on children.

14. Teaching from Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory, but highly variable, as it was at the previous inspection. That in Year 4 is very good, because staff plan activities very carefully to meet the needs of pupils who make different rates of progress. This is particularly effective in providing a high level of challenge for all groups of pupils. There is also very good teaching by visiting staff who teach music. Teaching in Year 2 is consistently good; with the enthusiastic approach of staff ensuring that lessons are interesting and fun. In virtually all classes teaching assistants are used well to provide additional support for pupils, especially those with SEN. This has a positive impact on the approach of lower attaining pupils, who generally grow in confidence and learn well. Staff manage pupils well, which ensures that lessons are conducted in a calm environment. In classes where teaching is good, teachers carefully ensure that all girls are involved actively in question and answer sessions and that work is 'girl friendly'. This is raising the standards and achievement of girls effectively, although this is not yet sufficiently consistent across the school.

15. However, teaching in too many lessons, particularly in Years 3 to 6, is mundane and lacks pace and impact. This is largely because lessons are not planned or organised well enough to identify how tasks will provide an appropriately high level of challenge for groups of pupils of different ability. This was identified in the previous inspection and affects pupils of higher attainment negatively. Many lessons 'play safe' and are undemanding. Staff sometimes talk for too long and limit the practical learning tasks in which the pupils take part. This particularly limits the development of investigative and problem-solving skills, especially in science. Staff do not make enough use of strategies such as 'Talking Partners' to ensure that all pupils are involved actively in different parts of the lesson and have a chance to clarify their thinking. At times, teaching in Years 3, 4 and 5 is unsatisfactory, and in one class it is barely adequate to move the pupils' learning forward. During inspection a very small number of staff refused to accept feedback from lessons, indicating that the learning needs of the pupils were not always foremost. Whilst the school and particularly the headteacher have taken action to address staff development, some staff need to do more to ensure that pupils' learning is safeguarded.

16. Assessment routines across the school are satisfactory. Staff have recently introduced procedures to enter the information on to a database that can track the progress pupils make through the school. The school has also extended target-setting procedures so that all pupils know what they have to do to improve their work. However, much of the work in assessment has been very recent and the role of assessment co-ordinator has been underdeveloped. The marking of pupils' work is very variable and at times minimal. While displays relating to curriculum areas are attractive, some of these do not include any pupils' work, which does not motivate them to present their work well.

17. A major weakness across the school is that the satisfactory range of assessment information available is not used well enough to inform the planning of lessons in order to provide the highest level of challenge. Staff do not identify the small but consistent steps that different groups of pupils need to make to reach the higher levels in their work. The previous inspection identified that assessment information was not used well enough and was a key issue for improvement. The school has been too slow in resolving this issue and senior staff are now wisely considering the development of the role of assessment co-ordinator by involving the phase group managers to oversee target-setting and monitoring within year groups.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory** overall. Opportunities to enrich the curriculum are **satisfactory**. The quality of the accommodation and resources is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The proportion of time spent on English, mathematics, science and religious education limits the time available for other subjects, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Curriculum planning does not ensure that all groups of pupils are sufficiently challenged.
- The provision for pupils with SEN is good.

18. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory; it meets statutory requirements, and the full range of Early Learning Goals is implemented. The curriculum for religious education meets requirements. The school's curriculum meets all other statutory requirements. However, nearly two-thirds of curriculum time is spent on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, with an above average proportion spent on teaching literacy in Years 3 to 6. Of the remaining subjects, ten per cent of time is spent on teaching religious education as required by the Catholic diocese. This reduces the time available for other subjects. Physical education in particular is affected and the school is considering how best to extend the provision for current pupils. The limited time available for other subjects, including art, restricts the time available for teaching basic skills. This lack of balance is particularly relevant as the school is aiming to increase creativity in the curriculum and the use of literacy in other subjects. There has been insufficient improvement in the development of the curriculum since the previous inspection.

19. The National Primary Strategy has been satisfactorily implemented in literacy and numeracy. The school has adopted a policy of concentrating on English, mathematics and science, with the objective of raising basic skills; this has met with some success. For example, in recent months, the development of speaking and listening and reading skills has been a priority. As a result, standards have risen. Similarly, the greater involvement of girls, who were identified as underachieving in national tests when compared with boys, is beginning to pay dividends. These are positive features that have improved the curriculum across the school.

20. Pupils who are higher attaining or gifted and talented are satisfactorily identified in teachers' planning. However, work set does not always challenge these pupils. Frequently, all pupils in a class are expected to do similar work and this does not challenge pupils of differing ability well enough. In mathematics, for example, teachers often use commercial worksheets which limit the extension of the higher attainers' work. Only where teaching was good or better did the opportunity for these pupils to extend their learning occur. For example, in a well-taught combined ICT and music lesson in Year 4, specific extension tasks were set for higher attainers and they were effectively helped to achieve the lesson's objectives. However, curriculum planning for higher attainers and those who are gifted or talented is inconsistent across the school.

21. Curriculum planning for mathematics has been satisfactorily developed since the previous inspection. The weakness identified in pupils using and applying mathematical skills to a range of problems has been satisfactorily addressed, though at times more could be done in some junior classes. There has been good development of ICT provision since the previous inspection. In particular, ICT is now satisfactorily used in most subjects. The school has a good range of computers in classrooms and a dedicated computer suite, which is used extensively. The introduction of specialist music teachers means that there are good opportunities for pupils to learn individual instruments. However, the link between the specialist music taught to classes and the music taught by teachers, such as composition of tunes on the computer, is insufficient.

22. The provision for SEN across the school is good and this has a positive effect on pupils' standards and achievement. Many pupils with SEN achieve results that approach or match the national average in tests as a result of this good provision. The extensive training of the teaching assistants by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has been particularly effective. They make a strong contribution to the development of pupils' levels of confidence. This is part of an extensive programme of continuous professional development of all staff, addressing the weakness raised in the previous inspection. The use of well written and considered individual education plans (IEPs), together with the extensive involvement of all interested parties, means that pupils with a statement of special educational need are well supported.

23. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities on offer, including sports such as soccer and netball. Support for learning outside the school day is good. The local Catholic community provides other effective opportunities for pupils' development, for example through the provision of a youth club to which many pupils belong. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive satisfactory support, are fully integrated in classroom activities and achieve standards similar to their peers.

24. Accommodation is good overall, but the outside area for Reception is less well developed than other parts of the school. The school is well resourced and the quality of books in the library contributes well to pupils' learning. There has been good improvement in resources overall since the previous inspection.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides **satisfactory** care, guidance and support for pupils. It involves them suitably in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils form very trusting relationships with adults, and the school has a strong commitment to pastoral care.
- The support for vulnerable pupils is good.
- Health and safety procedures are adequate, but need strengthening.
- The personal guidance for pupils is good, but the monitoring of pupils' work does not always lead to good academic guidance.

Commentary

25. Because of the very good quality of relationships, pupils are happy to approach staff with any problems, confident that they will be willing and able to help. Many classrooms have books where pupils jot down concerns for later discussion. Induction arrangements for the youngest children are good, and those who arrive part way through their schooling are given a warm welcome and good support, which helps them to settle swiftly. Support staff are particularly effective at helping pupils take part successfully in lessons. The recently introduced 'Care and Share' group, run by a teaching assistant, with active input from the headteacher, provides an enjoyable haven for those who are feeling fragile or who find it difficult to behave well throughout the lunch period. Others with particular difficulties have access to social worker support provided by a local Catholic charity, which offers another listening ear and short-term guidance. The school's strong pastoral commitment to pupils ensures that they feel happy and do not like being absent for any reason.

26. Procedures to ensure child protection are good, with all staff receiving training, and records of concerns kept in a suitably confidential manner. The school conducts regular health and safety checks, carries out suitable risk assessments for educational visits and provides adequate care for those who feel unwell or have accidents. However, it has not conducted formal risk assessments of the day-to-day hazards posed by a large community, for example, of the many uneven surfaces and loose pebbles in the junior playground. Supervision outside is adequate, but at times pupils are playing at a considerable distance from any adult. Lunchtimes are logistical operations rather than enjoyable occasions and not all mid-day staff have warm relationships with pupils. However, the school does seek pupils' opinions about how to improve provision, and pupils definitely consider that they have a say in school affairs.

27. While the personal support for pupils is of good quality, academic guidance is more variable. The new 'Learning to Learn' initiative means that in most classrooms the displays offer pupils helpful hints, for example 'We are good learners because we can extend our answers, modify our work etc.' and group targets for pupils to achieve. Pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science is tracked satisfactorily, but teachers do not always use the information to provide sufficient challenge, particularly for higher attaining pupils. Teachers' marking seldom provides clear guidance on how to improve, and pupils only have a hazy understanding of what they need to do in order to improve their work. Overall, the quality of care, guidance and support of pupils has dipped since the previous inspection.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnerships with parents, other schools and the wider community are all **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many parents are generous with their support for the school, but a significant minority is dissatisfied with what it provides.
- The school provides much information and many opportunities for parents to involve themselves in their children's learning.
- There are some good individual links with local schools and colleges.

Commentary

28. The majority of parents express very positive views about the school, praising in particular the settling-in arrangements and the fact that, while being expected to work hard, their children are happy there. Most parents find staff very approachable and there is evidence of good involvement of parents related to, for instance, pupils who have SEN or those who find it difficult to behave well all the time. However, a significant number of parents, particularly those with older children, express concerns about their perception that standards, particularly of behaviour, are in decline. These views came as a surprise to other parents and school staff and are the reason why parental partnership is judged to be satisfactory rather than good. Inspection findings are that behaviour throughout the school is good overall and exclusions have been reduced. The school is now aware that it needs to work hard to address these perceptions, whether or not they are accurately based, and counteract any misinformation in the local community. Overall, links with parents and the community have fallen since the last inspection.

29. The school provides much useful information for parents, including a prospectus and governors' annual report, as well as a welcoming 'Guide for Parents'. Teachers also issue curriculum information on a termly basis and some hints on how parents can help their children at home, and there are open afternoons and occasional workshops. Some parents volunteer their help in school on a regular basis and for a number of years parents have run 'Kerbkraft' courses for Year 1 pupils. The Parent Teacher Association is very active in raising funds, in the past year providing £11,000 for playground apparatus. Parents are also very generous in their support for the school's considerable charity fund-raising activities. Pupils' annual progress reports have improved since the previous inspection but, still, not all teachers make it clear whether pupils are working above, at or below average for their age. Some comments relating to individuals of the same age who are working at very different levels are identical.

30. Transfer arrangements with the various secondary schools to which pupils transfer are satisfactory. There are good science links with one school, through loans of apparatus and input from teaching staff, and five of the school's teaching assistants have studied mathematics at another school. Holy Cross accepts pupils on work experience and student teachers on placements. Pupils sing in the local community, take part in activities such as 'Citizen of the Year' and involve themselves in the parish, for instance through the liturgy and harvest distributions. Such partnership working enriches the provision for pupils and helps them to understand their relationship with the community of which they are part.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**. The leadership of the headteacher is **good**. The leadership of other key members of staff is **satisfactory**. The leadership of the governing body is **satisfactory**. Management of the school is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is good and she has a clear strategic plan to improve the quality of education in the school.
- The school is committed to ensuring the full inclusion of pupils, and the management of SEN is effective.
- Staff have good opportunities to develop their professional knowledge.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored and evaluated rigorously enough to improve the quality of teaching.

Commentary

31. The headteacher is a key figure in leading school improvement processes. She has a clear understanding of where the school is in relation to its strengths and weaknesses and a well based vision for the future developments needed for the school's improvement. Following her appointment since the last inspection she has worked hard to move the school forward by putting the needs of the pupils at the top of the agenda for change. She has created a clearly defined school improvement plan (SIP), which identifies the most important priorities needed to raise standards and improve teaching throughout the school. The headteacher is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and identifying the needs of individual pupils. A more focused attention to the way girls learn, for example, has resulted in a more positive approach in the way they are taught. Those pupils with SEN are well supported and their needs are met well. However, at times the headteacher has encountered difficulties in helping other staff, governors and a vocal minority of parents to identify what must be improved and the pace necessary to make such changes.

32. The headteacher has worked hard to make improvements across the school; however, systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are not yet sufficiently developed. The roles of the subject co-ordinators and assessment co-ordinator are not developed enough to identify rigorously and accurately how assessment information is used and where improvements in teaching and learning need to take place. These weaknesses were identified as key issues for improvement in the previous inspection. Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education remain key issues, and this has had a negative effect on school improvement since the previous inspection. However, the management of SEN and that of provision for pupils speaking English as an additional language are both managed well, which promotes learning effectively.

33. Staff have attended many training courses and these have resulted in good improvements in the pupils' learning, such as the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills and their knowledge of the use of ICT. Teaching assistants have been given good opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills, such as developing their own mathematical understanding, which is used to increase pupils' skills.

34. The governing body is a supportive group and committed to the improvement of education throughout the school. Governors have taken on specific roles to help monitor the quality of teaching, so that a more effective system of evaluating the quality of education can be developed. Although they visit the school and have started to do some lesson observations, particularly in religious education, they have not yet sufficiently developed their first-hand knowledge of the quality of education. They understand the school's strengths and some of its weaknesses but are not fully clear where all the areas of development are needed. They are increasingly aware of statutory requirements that need to be met. They have a clear performance management system for the

headteacher and ensure that the objectives focus on the school's priorities. Governors have recently become aware of the need to ensure that information passed to the community about the school is accurately based and is not misinformed.

35. Finances are generally managed satisfactorily. The headteacher and governing body are ensuring that the large 'carry forward' from previous years is being spent wisely, on building works, for example. The school ensures that satisfactory value for money is achieved: it undertakes rigorous competitive tendering for services such as building work. It was very keen to ensure entitlement to good 'after sales' services as well as good value for money when buying computer resources.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	922,077
Total expenditure	961,892
Expenditure per pupil	2,829

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	82,225
Balance carried forward to the next	42,409

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

36. The children's level of attainment when they start in the Nursery is broadly average for their age, although this varies from year to year and in some recent cohorts it has been below average. Most of the children this year are likely to attain the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development by the time they leave the Reception classes, but standards in other areas are lower. Overall, teaching is satisfactory; this leads to children's achievement being satisfactory. Teaching in the Nursery is consistently good and it is broadly satisfactory in the Reception classes. The Foundation Stage team work together, so the co-ordinator is aware of developments throughout the Foundation Stage, but the quality of teaching is not sufficiently well monitored and evaluated adequately to improve the efficiency of teaching. This has resulted in some free play activities in Reception classes lacking sufficient structure and direction to ensure the most purposeful use of time and staff expertise. The overall quality of teaching and learning has dipped since the previous inspection, when it was good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for personal, social and emotional development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's attitudes to learning are good; they are interested and involved in activities.
- Children are developing their independence well.
- Play sessions are not always sufficiently balanced between focused activities and child-initiated activities.

Commentary

37. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is satisfactory. Children arrive into the Nursery happily and settle quickly to productive play. Staff visit the children at home before they start in the Nursery; this enables the children to feel secure, and relationships start to develop before the children start school. Many children have attended a variety of pre-school education, which has contributed to their social skills. Children behave well in both the Nursery and Reception classes. They are interested in the variety of activities on offer and work productively on tasks. Children play happily in play sessions and develop their initiative well, although at times the sessions are not always sufficiently balanced between structured activities and child-initiated activities. High priority is given to this area of learning, with the result that children achieve satisfactorily and attainment is sound and children reach the goals expected for their age.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are effectively learning the sounds represented by letters.
- Children are developing their speaking and listening skills well.

Commentary

38. Teaching is satisfactory in this area of learning. Children achieve satisfactorily overall and reach the targets expected for their age. Children often come into the Nursery with levels of speaking and listening below what is normally expected for their age. Good attention to developing these skills results in good progress in the children's speech and their ability to listen. By the time they leave the Reception classes, most children are secure in their knowledge of linking sounds to letters. Children are taught to read systematically, taking books home to read with their parents in order to support their learning. They learn to form letters correctly and to build words accurately. The higher achieving children are able to write sentences accurately for themselves.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children learn about shapes, space and measures well.

Commentary

39. The children's achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. Standards are average and children achieve the targets expected. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children learn about shapes and simple measuring well. They learn to use language such as 'more' and 'less' accurately. Good emphasis is placed on the children's collecting of information and the making of simple graphs to represent their findings. Children learn about numbers naturally through counting the number of children present, for example. They progress to simple addition and subtraction in the Reception classes. Appropriate emphasis is placed on teaching this area of learning, and this results in the children making satisfactory progress.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children use ICT well to support their learning.

Commentary

40. Children use the computers in the computer suite to good effect to support their learning. In the Nursery the computers are effective tools in children's learning. Children have a good range of activities to enable them to investigate, such as experimenting with water to find out whether salt water is harmful to plants. Themed activities connected to Noah's Ark link well to interesting activities, so that children can investigate objects and identify materials. Overall, the quality of teaching in this area is satisfactory and the children's achievement is sound, though they are unlikely to attain the Early Learning Goals in this area because of the low general level of knowledge they have when they enter the Nursery.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are learning to control their movements well.
- Children have good opportunities to use a range of equipment.

Commentary

41. The children's achievement in the area of physical development is satisfactory. Good use is made of the hall for directed activities. Staff have recently developed the outside area to create an attractive and stimulating environment for the Nursery children. However, the outside accommodation is not as effective for the Reception classes. They are timetabled to use the Nursery area, but one of the Reception classes does not have its own secure outside area. Children follow instructions very well in directed sessions and are learning to control their movements very successfully. Consequently, they are learning a sense of space and the ability to move with growing confidence. Children use a selection of simple tools and small equipment to develop their fine manipulative skills effectively. Overall, the teaching and learning are satisfactory, although most children are unlikely to attain the Early Learning Goals in this area because of the level of skills they have when they enter the Nursery.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are developing their imagination well.

Commentary

42. Teaching is satisfactory. Children have good opportunities to create imaginative scenarios, such as playing with a Noah's Ark created from large equipment, and in small world play. Children use technology well to express their ideas through paint and drawing programs. They are able to explore colour and texture, using paint, papers and a variety of materials. Achievement is satisfactory, though most children are unlikely to attain the Early Learning Goals in this area because of the level of skills they have when they enter the Nursery.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are above average.
- Pupils with SEN achieve well because of the quality of support they receive.
- The learning tasks set for pupils do not always sufficiently challenge the more able.
- The teaching of English is not consistent throughout the school.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills in other subjects.

Commentary

43. Standards in speaking and listening in Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. Throughout the school pupils achieve well and make good progress in learning to speak confidently in extended sentences to adults and to each other. From an early age pupils are encouraged to use a mature vocabulary, which they use effectively to describe characters in stories. Pupils of all ages and abilities are good active listeners and demonstrate consideration for the equal rights of others when working in groups and pairs. The development of such skills has been a school priority and the work done is paying dividends.

44. Standards in reading by the end of Year 2 are in line with the national average overall and similar to those at the time of the last inspection. The standards are slightly lower than the 2004 national test results. The current cohort contains a greater number of pupils with SEN. A higher than average number of pupils are currently attaining the expected Level 2, but a smaller proportion is attaining the higher Level 3. The majority of pupils of all abilities say that they love to read. All pupils are encouraged to read at home, and this helps them to move forward. Pupils progress through a range of published schemes but, in some classes and year groups, books for higher attaining pupils lack sufficient challenge.

45. Standards of writing are in line with the national average by the end of Year 2. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection and of the 2004 national test results. While many pupils of average and below average ability attain the expected level in writing tests, there are still relatively few higher attaining pupils gaining Level 3. Strategies to address improving the standards of writing are under way but there has not been sufficient time for them to have a major impact on standards. Standards of handwriting, spelling and presentation of work are satisfactory throughout the school.

46. By Year 6, standards overall in reading are average. Most pupils read suitable books for their age and ability, with a good understanding of the text. Standards in writing by the end of Year 6 are in line with those seen nationally. This is similar to standards in 2004 and those at the time of the last inspection. Too few pupils attain the higher levels in writing still, despite a high number of pupils of below average ability achieving well. This is because there are too many occasions when work for pupils of above average attainment lacks challenge. The school has worked with local advisers to organise shorter writing tasks. Whilst this has many benefits, it does not always provide the balance necessary to enable pupils to extend writing where appropriate. Pupils do not spend sufficient time on extended writing activities and on drafting, improving and refining their work. Groups of pupils of average and below average ability achieve well because they are given appropriate tasks and are well supported.

47. The rate of pupils' progress generally is satisfactory, and this represents satisfactory achievement for pupils overall. Though pupils in some year groups make good progress, this is often inconsistent. Pupils with SEN receive high quality targeted support in literacy and, as a result, are achieving well.

48. The overall quality of teaching and learning across the school is satisfactory and this represents a slight improvement since the school's last inspection. The teaching of reading, speaking and listening is of a more uniformly good standard across the school than the teaching of writing. This is because these aspects of the curriculum have been given a higher priority for staff development. In some classes, particularly of older pupils, the focus has been on short pieces of descriptive or factual writing rather than on longer narratives.

49. There are a number of examples of good and very good teaching where teachers plan carefully and use effective questioning to assess understanding and challenge pupils' thinking. Although most teachers generally plan their lessons well, with different tasks for lower attaining pupils, some teachers' planning is insufficiently focused on the needs of different groups of pupils. As a result, the work set for the more able pupils is not always sufficiently demanding. Pupils are beginning to be involved in their own self-assessment and have targets displayed in their books, although they are unclear about what they need to do next to improve. The marking of pupils' work is variable in quality and, overall, provides few comments that show pupils the way forward. Teaching assistants are generally well trained and managed and they support learning very effectively.

50. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and management. She is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject and has provided training and support for her colleagues in introducing new initiatives. She has worked hard to address both the concern over the relatively small number of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing and the relative underachievement of girls. The school has introduced a suitable system for tracking pupils' progress in reading and writing, but the process of setting individual targets for pupils to achieve is not rigorous enough.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

51. The development of speaking and listening skills across the curriculum is good because of teachers' effective use of role-play techniques in a range of subjects. However, there is too much missed opportunity to develop pupils' writing skills in other subjects, such as history, geography and religious education. Overall, pupils make fairly good use of ICT to present their work, but the range and amount of such opportunities is variable from class to class.

MATHEMATICS

The quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils with SEN and lower attainers achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is highly variable and is not good enough in some Year 3 to Year 6 classes.
- Some higher attainers are not challenged in lessons and do not achieve the higher levels.
- The historic underachievement of girls is being tackled with positive strategies.

Commentary

52. Standards are similar to those found during the previous inspection, and are satisfactory overall at both Years 2 and 6, as indicated in the national tests over time. The numeracy element of the National Primary Strategy has been fully implemented. Pupils achieve satisfactorily at both key

stages, but there is some variation in this. Girls have consistently achieved lower standards than boys, and fewer pupils achieve the higher levels than is seen nationally. The inspection found that where teaching was good or better, this is being addressed. The teachers make an effort to engage girls, especially in question and answer sessions, to check their rate of learning and understanding of the task. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory

53. In lessons, pupils were generally enthusiastic, behaved well and were keen to learn. Attitudes to the subject are good. Teaching assistants are effectively used to support pupils with SEN or lower attainers and this is effective in raising their standards and achievement. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are also satisfactorily supported and achieve standards similar to their peers.

54. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. Teachers manage pupils well. However, it is the variability in the quality of teaching which adversely affects pupils' standards and achievement and slows the rate of progress of development in this subject. For example, in less effective lessons, particularly in Years 3 to 6, there is often little pace in the teaching; sometimes the teacher talks at the pupils rather than engages them in discussion. Girls are not always fully engaged and are passive in class; little opportunity is given to them to explain their ideas and for the teacher to check their rate of learning. Other features of such lessons include the over-reliance on commercial worksheets and the lack of challenge for high attaining pupils or for those with a gift or talent for the subject.

55. Assessment and the marking of work is satisfactory overall. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively from Years 1 to 6. End of unit assessments are carried out and information from these used to plan further work. The quality of planning is satisfactory overall, but varies from class to class and does not always identify a high enough level of challenge for more able pupils. Targets are set for improvement, but it is not always evident in some classes that pupils are aware of what they need to do next to make progress. The exception is pupils with SEN, who are almost always well supported and have clear targets to achieve and know how to achieve them. Marking is adequate and is sometimes evaluative and used to help take pupils' learning forward, but too often it consists of just ticks and crosses.

56. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall. The subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable and helpful to other staff but her role is underdeveloped. The strong focus on developing speaking and listening skills and reading in recent months has to some extent been at the expense of the development of mathematics. This is beneficial in oral mathematical work, as pupils are more articulate and able to express their calculations more fully. However, the school has been concentrating on this one aspect of mathematics rather than developing the subject as a whole across the school. The co-ordinator has had little opportunity to monitor consistency in planning and the quality of teaching and learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. Provision is satisfactory overall and there are opportunities for pupils to use mathematics in science and ICT. A significant proportion of lessons are held in the ICT suite, and pupils use the computer and interactive whiteboard extensively and effectively. Some opportunities are missed in the foundation subjects, such as geography, owing to the lack of time available.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are slightly above average and the majority of pupils achieve well.

- Pupils have well-based factual understanding of aspects of science and good levels of interest in the subject, but investigative skills are less well developed.
- Work is not always planned well enough to ensure a consistent level of challenge for the highest attaining pupils.
- The role of the subject co-ordinator is not well enough developed in rigorously monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision.

Commentary

58. The 2004 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 indicated that a very high proportion of the pupils reached the levels expected for their age and that an above average proportion attained the higher levels. National tests taken at the end of Year 6 showed that standards in 2004 were well above average when compared with schools nationally and when compared with those with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. Standards were similarly high in 2003.

59. Inspection findings are that standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are slightly above average. The large majority of pupils, including those with SEN and the small numbers speaking English as an additional language, achieve well. Boys and girls now appear to achieve equally. However, at times some of the higher attaining pupils could achieve more. Standards in Year 2, while above average, are not quite as high as in previous years, as there is a larger proportion of pupils with SEN within the year group than in recent years. Similarly in Year 6, while the large majority of pupils achieve the expected level, slightly fewer are on line to achieve the higher levels than last year.

60. Pupils generally have quite good understanding of factual areas of science, including life and living processes, materials and physical processes. Most have good awareness that when conducting experiments they have to ensure that tests are fair, but they are often less secure in how they are to ensure this happens. All pupils have positive attitudes to science lessons and particularly enjoy practical learning activities, as seen in Year 2 when pupils were finding out about forces. These pupils were really interested in hypothesising and then testing how many of them could get inside a very large type of elastic band. However, a weaker area, and one not easily measured in national tests, is the pupils' ability to plan and conduct experimental and investigative activities. The sample of pupils' work showed that on too few occasions do teachers set an open-ended question for the pupils to carry out their own lines of enquiry, and this limits their confidence and problem-solving skills.

61. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have good knowledge of factual aspects of science, and in Year 6 especially effective use is made of a visiting teacher from a local secondary school to which many of the pupils will transfer. In such lessons good use is made of equipment and staff expertise to set up tests where pupils find out whether the growth of micro-organisms can be controlled by hand washing. However, throughout the school, staff do not make good enough use of assessment information to plan sufficiently challenging work to meet the needs of the higher attaining pupils. Too often, the same or very similar tasks are set for all ability groups and, while meeting the learning needs of the majority, they do not ensure that the most able are challenged on a regular basis.

62. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The very experienced subject co-ordinator liaises well with colleagues. However, management of the subject is unsatisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been a low priority and the subject co-ordinator has had few opportunities to monitor provision, especially in Years 1 and 2. This makes it very difficult to identify whether the needs of all groups, such as the highest attaining pupils, are met well enough throughout the school. There has been some complacency that, as standards in science have been good in the last two years, subject development is not a necessity. The use of ICT in the subject is very variable, and an area for further development. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory** and good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and working hard to improve standards.
- The computer suite is used well to support other subjects, especially mathematics.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning and assessment is not sufficiently developed.
- The computers in the classrooms are not always used effectively in the course of lessons.

Commentary

63. Good improvements have been made to the provision of ICT since the last inspection. The resources have been increased and pupils now use the computer suite on a regular basis. Standards attained by the pupils in both key stages are satisfactory. Pupils work enthusiastically in the computer suite and are regularly timetabled to use it. By the end of Year 6 pupils are able to create their own web page designs and they understand the basic features needed to create a web page. They can create databases and produce accurate spreadsheets. They now have a good range of opportunities to consolidate their skills and develop their learning. By the end of Year 2 pupils use computers to amend and record their work.

64. Overall, the quality of teaching throughout the school is satisfactory. Staff have improved their own knowledge of computer programs and have developed their skills in using the computers to support pupils' learning. Good coverage of the subject is provided and pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. However, the computers in the classrooms are not always used effectively to assist lessons and in some classes were rarely seen in use.

65. The use of ICT has been well developed in mathematics and is used effectively in these lessons. The use of the interactive whiteboard, for example, is good at engaging pupils. In one very good Year 4 lesson, the teacher used displays of angles and points of the compass on the interactive whiteboard. Pupils responded very positively; it gave visual reinforcement to their discussion, and higher attainers showed their mathematical skills, using effective demonstration. Many teachers' knowledge and understanding of ICT have improved significantly since the previous inspection. However, there are still a few teachers who are less competent and confident in using ICT in all areas of the curriculum.

66. The leadership of the subject is sound. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has contributed well to the improvements. She has provided good support for the rest of the staff and opportunities for their professional development in the subject. However, the role of the co-ordinator is underdeveloped in monitoring the quality of the teaching, and assessments are not yet sufficient to measure pupils' individual progress and attainment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used satisfactorily to support learning. In the computer suite the children enjoy lessons and are taught a variety of subjects through the use of technology. They compose tunes and design pictures, for example. Some staff use the computers in the classrooms but this is an area which needs to develop in consistency.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was not inspected in this inspection, but is reported elsewhere.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good cross-curricular links with literacy and music.
- Older pupils have a secure understanding of how to find out about the past.
- There is too much reliance on worksheets in some classes and too few opportunities given for pupils to express their ideas freely through writing.
- The use of ICT to support learning in history is inconsistent across the school.

Commentary

68. The standard of pupils' work seen is average. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory, and evidence from pupils' work supports this judgement. All groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily. Provision in the subject remains much the same as at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils in Year 1 study photographs of the church and shopping centre to compare old and new. They understand how styles and materials change. With adult help they search the Internet for information on old buildings and save the sites they find in their favourites file. In discussions with Year 6 pupils, it is clear that they are knowledgeable about the need for historical evidence. Pupils explain which sources of evidence are the most reliable. They also understood the way in which biased evidence could influence perceptions.

69. Effective cross-curricular links between history, literacy, music and geography have been established. This strengthens pupils' understanding when they study the Tudors and explore the local area. Worksheets are effective where they are used selectively to help pupils understand the period and reduce the need for younger or below average pupils to write. However, there is too much reliance on them in some classes for pupils of average and above average ability. In many classes, pupils are given too few opportunities to develop their writing skills through the subject. Pupils are not encouraged to aspire to a high standard of presentation in their written work in history because the subject has previously not been given enough priority and curriculum time. In Years 3 to 6 some older pupils begin to use ICT to search for information on historical figures. However, the use of computers to extend pupils' learning in history is insufficiently well established in all classes.

70. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Although a full curriculum is in place, the development of the subject has not been given a high priority. The subject co-ordinator has a low profile in terms of moving provision forward and is not sufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision across the school. The school recognises that more needs to be done in assessing and monitoring the development of particular subject skills, including the use of ICT to support learning in the subject.

Geography

71. Geography was not observed during the inspection, and it is therefore not possible to make judgements about the overall quality of provision. From discussions and the information available, it can be seen that the programme of study covers all National Curriculum requirements. Overall, the pupils' work seen in books was of a satisfactory standard. There are good cross-curricular links with history in Year 1 and 2, where pupils discuss changes to the local environment over time and begin to make maps. Pupils in Year 6 have a fairly good idea of how they can improve their work as a result of teachers' comments and suggestions, but in most other classes teachers do not consistently inform pupils of their progress. Writing in the subject is given a low priority and

generally pupils' work is poorly presented, with much of the handwriting being careless and untidy. The school recognises the need to increase the opportunities for formal monitoring of teaching and assessment of the subject to ensure quality and raise standards.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not develop the basic skills of drawing to a high enough level, partly because not enough time is spent developing such expertise.
- The role of the subject co-ordinator is not well enough developed in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

Commentary

72. Standards in art and design are broadly average for the age of the pupils across the school. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily, as they did at the last inspection. However, pupils make less progress in developing the basic art skills of drawing than they do in craft skills, including techniques such as batik. However, artwork is valued well in school and the quality of display is good, considerably enhancing pupils' self-esteem and the learning environment.

73. While the school has a broadly satisfactory curriculum, the time available is sometimes limited and not a high enough priority is placed on the development of skills.. In some respects curriculum planning is the wrong way round – looking at developing themes in pupils' work before they have well-developed basic skills. The sample of pupils' work in sketchbooks throughout the school is weak and underdeveloped. Pupils' portrait work is often of a limited quality and at times is below average. This is epitomised in Year 3, where pupils' work on relationships, studying the mother and child image, lacks technical skill and some work is poor. However, other work, including still life and observational drawings by older pupils, is of a better standard and is average overall. The sample of pupils' work includes some interesting craftwork, and pupils have worked in the style of well-known artists.

74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but in none of the lessons observed was teaching good. While the sample of work indicates that in some years teaching is better, the overall quality is often not good enough to enhance the pupils' natural abilities and move their learning forward to an above average level. This is largely because art has not been a priority for subject development in the last few years and some teachers do not have good enough drawing and painting skills themselves to move the pupils' learning skills very far forward.

75. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has compiled a useful portfolio of digital images and pupils' work; some of this is annotated and levelled for assessment purposes. However, this does little to indicate the proportions of pupils achieving at given levels and how such information is used to inform teaching. There has been little formal monitoring of teaching and learning, which has allowed some areas of weakness to occur.

Design and technology

76. No lessons were seen during the inspection, and a judgement on teaching cannot be made. However, the curriculum for design and technology is secure and is planned appropriately within national guidelines. By the end of Year 6, standards are satisfactory. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are learning useful skills, such as creating ways of joining structures and strengthening them. Pupils

are learning to plan their designs well and evaluate them. They are able to use their own initiative so that they can experiment with designs. In Years 5 and 6 the pupils create various shelters and moveable structures. In Year 2 pupils make good evaluations of their work. They create moveable features in their designs and use a variety of suitable materials. Overall, standards by the end of Year 2 are satisfactory.

Music

77. Not enough music was seen to enable a judgement to be made about standards and achievement in lessons and the quality of teaching and learning overall. The music lessons seen were mostly taken by a visiting specialist. The quality of teaching and learning in these lessons is very good. The lessons are well planned and pupils are attentive and learn very well. There are good cross-curricular links with history, as pupils compare pieces of music played in modern and Tudor styles. Pupils sing well in Year 2 and obviously enjoy the activities. They play both pitched and unpitched instruments effectively to accompany their singing of folk songs. In a well-taught Year 3 lesson, the teacher used ICT well in music; pupils arranged musical phrases effectively to make a tune. The visiting music teacher attends one day a week and is used to release teachers from the classroom. He is responsible for leading and managing music, but links with other teachers are limited by his short time in school.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good professional coaching for pupils in games.
- There is inadequate communication between coaches and class teachers for planning and assessment of pupils.
- There has been insufficient curriculum time given to physical education until recently, and this has slowed some pupils' progress.

Commentary

78. In Years 1 to 6 standards are average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in Year 6 work with enthusiasm and interest when planning and executing twisting and turning sequences. They show good control of movements, and some pupils display some talent for gymnastics. They work co-operatively in pairs and evaluate each other's work thoughtfully. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 now achieve well in games because of the expert coaching they receive from professional sports trainers. Pupils with SEN achieve well because they are well supported and integrated. Boys and girls succeed equally well. However, there is insufficient time available to teach all aspects of the curriculum in sufficient depth.

79. Teaching in the school is mainly satisfactory, with some examples of good teaching in Years 1 and 3. Lessons taught by school staff are well planned, with clear learning objectives that are usually shared effectively with pupils. Assessment of pupils is not well established. Teaching by professional sports coaches is good and enhances the curriculum, but planning and assessment are not shared with teachers or the subject leader to ensure the school is well informed about pupils' progress. Pupils are taught swimming and have the opportunity to take part in a range of different sports. One member of staff also takes a club every lunchtime, and after-school clubs enrich the curriculum well.

80. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The scheme of work is about to be replaced and the subject has been given low priority as a result. Currently, not enough attention is given to monitoring of standards and liaison with external agencies to ensure consistency and quality of provision. Resources for physical education are good and the school is fortunate to have an excellent open space that is well used for games and athletics in fine weather.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

81. No direct teaching of citizenship was seen. However, the school's strong Catholic ethos means that considerable attention is paid to pupils' personal development, and provision is good. The school council plays a clear role in the life of the school. Pupils raise funds for charities and take their responsibilities seriously. The whole-school behaviour policy was discussed and modified in the light of their views. In discussion, pupils believe this is one of the reasons for the good behaviour and attitudes in the school, and inspection findings confirm this. Year 6 pupils take part effectively in a peer mentoring scheme. They call themselves 'buddies' and help with the pastoral care of their peers. These pupils are justifiably proud of the role they play in the school. It gives them significant personal responsibility and helps them mature and develop understanding of other pupils' feelings, attitudes and values. Pupils in Year 1 contribute to their class rules, and those in Years 3 and 4 take part in mock elections to enable them to understand effectively the principles of democracy. These activities help pupils mature and contribute to their understanding of the world around them. Overall, these responsibilities contribute well to pupils' understanding of citizenship. They help to establish pupils' very good personal relationships in the school and prepare them well for the future.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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