

INSPECTION REPORT

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Sowerby Bridge

LEA area: Calderdale

Unique reference number: 107558

Headteacher: Mr B Coleman

Lead inspector: Mrs E Linley

Dates of inspection: 1st – 3rd November 2004

Inspection number: 267615

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 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	154
School address:	St Peter's Avenue Sowerby Bridge West Yorkshire
Postcode:	HX6 1BL
Telephone number:	01422 831360
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr. M Henry
Date of previous inspection:	1 st February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School overlooks the town of Sowerby Bridge in Calderdale. It serves a wide geographical area including the parishes of Saint Patrick's in Sowerby Bridge and the Good Shepherd in Mytholmroyd. As a result, many children travel to school by bus. Because of the nature of the school's catchment, it serves areas that are characterised by a wide mix of housing, some privately owned and some housing trust or privately rented. Children enter the reception class at the beginning of the term in which they are five years of age. Most children have attended some form of pre-school provision before starting school and their attainment on entry is generally in line with what might be expected nationally. However, because the school is smaller than the average sized primary school there is a variance in attainment on entry to school. This reflects the nature of a small school and the differences seen between year groups of pupils. There are 154 girls and boys who attend Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School and there are no pupils whose first language is believed not to be English. Twelve per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals and this is broadly in line with the national average. The school has 28 pupils on its list of special educational need, and the percentage of those who have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need is below the national average. Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School gained the Investor in People award in 2003 and is currently involved in the National Primary Strategy's Primary Leadership Programme.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27281	Mrs E Linley	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage, art and design, design and technology and music.
9649	Mrs J Smith	Lay inspector	
27777	Mr R Greenall	Team inspector	English, information and communication technology, history and special educational needs.
19226	Mr S Flood	Team inspector	mathematics, science, geography and physical education.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective and inclusive school. As a result of good teaching, pupils achieve well overall and attain standards that are broadly average. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school's ethos for learning is very good and pupils achieve well overall
- Standards achieved in writing and in information and communication technology (ICT) are below expectations.
- The leadership of the headteacher is good and he is well supported by key members of staff.
- Management is good, however, evaluation of strategic planning is not sufficiently rigorous.
- The curriculum is good overall and is enriched with very good opportunities for learning.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to investigate in science.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for the Foundation Stage is good.
- Pupils achieve very well in music and attain above expectations.
- The quality of care, welfare, health and safety is good.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and they behave very well.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good.

The school has improved well overall since its last inspection. Very good progress has been made in respect to the budget and the school is now in a better position financially. As a result of very good financial management, the school has made significant improvements to the accommodation and premises of the school. A clear focus on improving the learning environment has made a positive contribution to pupils' overall achievement. Assessment procedures are now more rigorous although the information gathered is not always used well enough to ensure that the needs of more able pupils are met. Progress has been made on each of the issues raised at the time of the last inspection that related to ICT; however, it has not been enough to achieve consistently satisfactory levels in provision and standards.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results

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

Pupils' achievement is good. The full range of inspection evidence confirms a variance in attainment on entry that reflects the small numbers in year groups. Attainment on entry to school is currently in line with what might be expected nationally. Children make a good start in reception and achieve well. As a result, standards by the end of reception are likely to be at the expected levels in five of the six areas of learning, for: communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. The exception to this is in children's personal, social and emotional development, where children are likely to exceed the expected levels for their age. Pupils achieve well overall in relation to their capability throughout school; however, 'more able' pupils do not always achieve as well as they should. Pupils attain average standards in English, mathematics and science.

Fluctuations in results from year to year can be traced to variations in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, children do not achieve as well as they should in writing and by Year 6 standards are below average. Similarly standards in ICT are below expectations. Other subjects were sampled and no overall judgements were made. Pupils achieve very well in music and attain above expectations for their age.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has high expectations for pupils' conduct and promotes very good relationships. Pupils have very good attitudes towards school and their behaviour is very good. Attendance and punctuality are good.

The quality of education is good and the quality of teaching is good overall. Very good use is made of teaching assistants and they make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils are keen to learn; however, the use of homework is inconsistent and does not always support pupils' learning well enough. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Teachers use an effective range of assessment strategies to track pupils' progress. It is used well to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs; however, it is not used consistently well enough to meet the needs of more able pupils. The quality of marking is inconsistent and does not support pupils well enough to help them understand how to improve their work. The school provides a good curriculum which is enriched by a very good range of activities and experiences. In science, however, pupils have insufficient opportunities to conduct investigations. Accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory overall. They are good in the Foundation Stage, however, they are unsatisfactory for ICT and the lack of computers seriously restricts pupils' opportunities to develop and use their ICT skills. Similarly the junior library is inadequate to meet pupils' needs. The school provides a good level of care for its pupils. Links with the community and with colleges are very good. Links and partnerships with other schools are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is good and he is supported well by key staff. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and of special educational needs are good. Although overall, management of the school is good, evaluation of strategic planning is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that priorities are based on a clear understanding of the school's present position. Financial management is very good. Governance is satisfactory overall and legal requirements are met. Governors are fully committed to support the school and have a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. All leaders in school demonstrate a very good commitment to inclusion and this underpins the school's ethos, which is also very good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Many parents expressed positive views about the school and are pleased with the warm welcome that they receive. A significant minority, however, expressed concerns about communication, for example in relation to consistency in homework diaries and reading records. In this respect the inspection team agrees with parents' concerns. All parents, however, value the very good provision for children's spiritual development and the school's high expectations for their children's very good behaviour. Pupils hold very positive views about their school and they enjoy the range of opportunities that is made available for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise pupils' achievement in writing.
- Improve the opportunities available for pupils' to conduct investigations in science.
- Raise standards achieved in ICT.
- Ensure that strategic planning is based upon rigorous evaluation of action taken.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards achieved are good overall with standards attained in English, mathematics and science being average. Children make a good start in reception (the Foundation Stage) and they continue to achieve well overall as they move through the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in reception achieve very well in their personal and social development.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should over time in writing and standards are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and particularly in their mental arithmetic skills.
- A lack of opportunities to conduct science investigations means that pupils do not achieve as well as they might in this area of the science curriculum.
- Standards and achievement are below expectations in ICT.
- More able pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils achieve very well in music and attain standards that are above expectations.

Commentary

Key Stage 1

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.8 (17.1)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.4 (16.6)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.9 (17.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 23 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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	26.5 (26.8)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	28.2 (26.4)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.6 (28.2)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

The 2003 national tests for 11 year olds showed that the standard attained in English and science was average and in mathematics it was above average. In comparison with similar schools, and in relation to pupils' prior attainment, standards were well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics. However, the school's trend of improvement for all subjects over the last four years has been above the national trend and fluctuations in results from year to year can be traced to variations in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The relative achievement of boys and girls in English in 2003, showed that girls outperformed boys by a large

margin. Inspection evidence shows currently that the gap is now closing as a result of the school's efforts to promote boys' achievement in English.

Children make a good start to school in the reception class and achieve well as a result of good teaching and the good quality provision that is in place for their needs. As a result, children are likely to attain the goals that they are expected to reach in five of the six areas of learning, for: communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. Children achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because children are given good opportunities to work together and to work independently. They develop confidence and so achieve standards in this area of learning that are above what might be expected.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their difficulties and the precise targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs). This is because detailed assessments of these pupils' needs effectively guide the support given by skilled and committed teaching assistants. However, more able pupils do not always achieve as well as they should because teachers do not consistently plan to meet these pupils needs.

Standards attained in English are average overall. In writing, however, standards are below average and achievement over time is unsatisfactory, particularly for more able pupils of different ages. The school is working hard to develop pupils' basic skills in reading and in handwriting, spelling and punctuation, and almost all pupils achieve well in these technical skills. Achievement is higher for girls than for boys, though the school's efforts to raise boys' achievement in writing are closing these gaps. However, by Year 6, few pupils achieve the more complex sentence structures and more adventurous choices of vocabulary normally expected of pupils of this age. This is mainly because pupils lack opportunities to develop independent writing as they move through school and this seriously restricts the achievement of the more able pupils, because they are seldom challenged to develop longer texts.

In mathematics, pupils achieve well owing to good teaching. A particular strength is the emphasis teachers place on mental arithmetic and this effectively contributes to the confidence pupils develop in applying the four rules of number. However, opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to apply their skills to real life problems. The majority of pupils achieve well overall in science, however, current resources for investigational activities are inadequate and so there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to conduct and devise scientific investigations. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in this area of the science curriculum.

At the time of the last inspection, standards in ICT were judged to be below expectations and the position in relation to pupils' achievement is the same. Whilst progress has been made on the recommendations made at the time, it has not been enough to achieve consistently satisfactory levels in provision and standards. Standards vary between year groups because of variations in classroom resources and in teachers' confidence and competence with ICT. Standards also vary unacceptably between the different branches of the subject because of variations in the amount and continuity of coverage. A significant contributor to pupils' underachievement is the lack of resources in hardware and software which are too patchy in type and quality to promote coherence, breadth and continuity in pupils' learning.

Insufficient evidence was available during the time of the inspection to make secure judgements on standards in history, geography, art and design, design and technology and physical education. However, the school places great importance on the creative arts and this was demonstrated in the very good achievement of pupils in music. The school has employed a music specialist to teach music throughout the school and this is having a significant impact on the quality of teaching of music and as a result pupils attain standards that are above expectations.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and they behave very well. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very keen learners.
- The school has very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils develop a very good sense of what is right and wrong.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good and the school forms a harmonious community.
- The school provides very good opportunities for spiritual reflection and pupils respond to these very well.

Commentary

The school provides a very orderly, happy and purposeful learning environment. In most lessons pupils' attentiveness, high level of interest, willingness to work hard and cooperative attitudes contribute well to their achievement. The headteacher leads the way by showing his enthusiasm for learning and younger pupils are delighted to be able to take good work to show to him. Weekly achievement assemblies are another way in which examples of good or improving work are celebrated.

Pupils respond very well to the school's high expectations of behaviour and parents agree that pupils behave very well. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported and included in learning activities so that they grow in success and self-esteem and play a full and fruitful part in school life. The strong Christian ethos helps pupils to develop a very clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils show a good level of responsibility and the school helps to develop this appropriately according to pupils' age. For example, the school trusts school council members to run a lunchtime club for older pupils and they do this in a responsible manner. The very few pupils who sometimes behave inappropriately are given appropriate guidance and support. There have been no exclusions.

Through carefully planned assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons, pupils learn to respect each other's feelings and values well. As a result, relationships between pupils are very good and incidents of bullying or harassment are rare. Parents agree that when incidents occur the school acts swiftly to deal with them. High quality assemblies are occasions for joyous celebration of faith and community and also for contemplation. Calm music or sounds and the use of candles or prayer pebbles help to set the scene for quiet reflection. Pupils respond to these very good opportunities for reflection in a very mature and respectful manner. The prayers which they write show that they are developing a genuine sense of spirituality.

Pupils are given good opportunities to learn about their own culture. The school is aware of the need to prepare pupils for life in multi-cultural Britain and the Asian dance day and after-school club provided a good opportunity for pupils to experience another culture.

Attendance

Attendance is above the national average and is carefully monitored by the school. Pupils arrive punctually and the registration period is used purposefully to support learning and provides a good start to the day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/03 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.2	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good** overall. Teaching and learning are good and the staff and visiting specialists to school contribute effectively to the very well enhanced curricular opportunities for learning. Very good links with the community and the good level of care shown for pupils' needs contribute significantly to the quality of education that the school provides.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are good. Overall, the quality of assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is good.
- A lack of resources in science and ICT has an adverse effect on teaching and learning.
- Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to pupils' achievement.
- Pupils who have special educational needs are taught and supported well.
- Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should behave.
- The use of specialist teachers enhances pupils' achievement.
- Assessment information is not used consistently to meet the needs of more able pupils and marking does not support pupils well enough in their understanding of how they can improve their work.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 33 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	12 (36%)	16 (49%)	4 (12%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall. The teacher is always well prepared and works very well with other adults in the classroom to meet the needs of individual children effectively. On some occasions, activities do not always challenge more able pupils enough. However, the teacher and support staff promote very good relationships within the Foundation Stage and all adults who work with the children have very high expectations of behaviour. Children respond very well and, as a result, they achieve well.

Although teaching through the school is good overall, areas for development were identified in some lessons. For example, where teaching was unsatisfactory, the focus of the lesson was not clear and a lack of resources impacted adversely on the teaching and learning of the science investigation that took place. Similarly, a lack of resources to support ICT and teachers' lack of confidence in the subject are significant contributors to pupils' not learning enough. However, where teachers have expertise in ICT, pupils speak positively of their achievement as in Years 4 and 5. In a Year 5 ICT lesson, the teacher worked very well with limited resources to provide a

worthwhile learning experience for pupils to copy, paste and resize images to produce a picture. In some lessons, teachers do not ensure that more able pupils are sufficiently challenged. This is evident in the teaching of writing skills where pupils do not always achieve as well as they should. In mathematics teachers were seen to make good use of 'smartscreens' to focus attention during whole class input and in science teachers have a clear focus to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of technical and subject specific language.

All teaching assistants work in very close partnership with class teachers to promote pupils' learning. When teaching assistants support groups of pupils, their achievement and learning are good. This is because there is a constant focus on the learning objective and a high standard of questioning. The good help given by teaching assistants is an important factor in the successful teaching and learning of pupils identified as having special educational needs. In almost all lessons observed when a teaching assistant was involved, pupils maintained focus and achieved well in whole-class, small group and individual tasks. The teaching assistants know pupils' needs well, are keenly aware of their own roles in the classroom, and help lessons to run smoothly.

Teachers and support staff rightly expect high standards of discipline and parents are very pleased with this aspect of teaching in school. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good; pupils respond very well to this and as a result, classrooms are happy environments where pupils are assured to receive praise and encouragement for their efforts. As a result, pupils' self-esteem and confidence are high. Parents appreciate the good quality of teaching in the school although they expressed concerns about the inconsistencies of homework to support their children's learning and this is a factor that the school recognises and plans to improve.

Teaching is enhanced by the use of specialist teachers in the school, for example, in music and in dance where pupils' high achievement is a direct outcome of the high quality teaching that takes place. For example, the dance teacher, engaged by the school in partnership with 'Dance for All' studio, worked very well to structure exercises and opportunities for creativity carefully to ensure that pupils achieved a high level of performance and control. The use of subject experts ensures that pupils are appropriately challenged to raise their own level of expertise in these subjects.

Teachers use an effective range of assessment strategies to track pupils' progress. Assessment is used well to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs; however, it is not used consistently well enough to meet the needs of more able pupils. Furthermore, whilst teachers' marking is mostly encouraging, it is inconsistent and does not provide pupils with a good understanding of how they might improve their work. In the Foundation Stage, ongoing assessment, based on observation of what children are doing in their lessons, is an effective feature and is used well to track children's progress.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum is good overall and is supported by many very good opportunities for enriched learning. The quality of the accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a curriculum that is enriched by a wide range of out of school activities.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good.
- Provision to develop pupils' skills in writing and in scientific investigations is limited.
- The match of staff to the curriculum is good.
- Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) and for science investigational activities are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and provides appropriately for the teaching of sex education and drugs awareness. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is based on the national guidance and the breadth of curriculum opportunities there is good. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education as they move through school and pupils' transfer to secondary education is smooth and effective.

The curriculum is successful in providing pupils with rich learning opportunities throughout the school and makes very effective use of expertise from the wider community, for example in music, dance, drama and sport. These experiences make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement, particularly in the use of subject specialists, for example, in dance and music. Similarly, the school has established effective links with Halifax Harriers and pupils benefit from tuition by experienced athletic coaches who encourage talented pupils to participate in 'schools of excellence'. Other specialist coaching is provided for in rugby league and gymnastics and is supported effectively by staff at the school providing extra-curricular opportunities that include netball, football, cross country and drama. Pupils particularly enjoy local sporting events and have won a range of sporting awards and during the inspection shared wonderful memories of visits made, for example to Whitby.

Curriculum provision to develop pupils' skills in writing is currently underdeveloped. Pupils lack opportunities to develop independent use of the different models of writing they learn. This seriously restricts the achievement of the more able pupils, because they are not sufficiently challenged to develop a command of longer texts. Similarly in science, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to conduct and devise scientific investigations. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they might.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in both key stages. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and all staff constantly seek to remove barriers to learning. Class teachers and their assistants work hard to achieve the targets contained in individual education plans and, as a result of this clear focus, achievement for pupils with special educational needs is good in relation to their starting points. Teachers and assistants effectively target their support and differentiate work for these pupils. Support staff are very effective in explaining tasks to pupils and devising step by step activities that ensure achievement.

The match of teachers to the curriculum is good with specialist knowledge used well in music and physical education. Some parents expressed concerns that a number of teaching staff left the school recently taking with them significant expertise. The recruitment of high quality teachers, however, has added very effectively to the school's work force and has ensured that the good match of teachers, to meet the pupils' needs, has been maintained.

The school has worked hard over a two period to improve accommodation which is now good. Fencing has reduced the previously high rate of vandalism and a new building for the Foundation Stage has been provided and this enables the school to effectively deliver the curriculum for reception aged children. Pupils enjoy being at the school and the comfortable and attractive accommodation makes a strong contribution to their sense of well-being.

Overall, resources for learning at the school are satisfactory. They are good for the Foundation Stage; however, resources for ICT are unsatisfactory and are impeding the progress and achievement of pupils in this subject. Similarly, resources for science do not adequately support the delivery of investigational activities and the library facilities for junior aged pupils are inadequate which again has an adverse effect on their achievement in English.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good care, guidance and support for pupils. School seeks and acts on pupils' views effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff work very effectively as a team to ensure pupils' well-being and safety
- Pupils are given good advice and guidance based on the monitoring of their achievement and personal development
- Arrangements for helping new pupils settle into school are good
- The school listens to pupils well and values their views

Commentary

Everyone in the school community works together to ensure that pupils are secure and well cared for and parents agree that their children are happy in school. Pupils are very confident in turning to their teachers if they are upset or need help.

Good, orderly school routines help pupils to feel secure. There is good caring supervision at lunchtime which helps to make this a happy part of the day. When pupils have minor accidents at playtime, they are well cared for by staff with first aid qualifications and the accidents are properly recorded. However, examination of the accident book shows that there is inconsistency in the way that these minor accidents are reported to parents and the school recognises that procedures for doing this need to be more consistent. The school uses professional agencies to ensure that the safety of the premises is regularly checked and risk assessment procedures are also good. There are sound procedures for child protection organised by the headteacher, who is the named person for child protection. Staff have not received any specific training on child protection; however, they are vigilant in their care for pupils.

The school carefully tracks pupils' academic progress to provide targeted support and guidance for pupils in their work; however, more able pupils are not consistently challenged to achieve their best. Pupils' self-esteem is very successfully promoted and their achievement celebrated by, for example, the giving of certificates in the weekly achievement assembly. Guidance provided for all pupils through assemblies and through personal, social and health education lessons is very good. Pupils with particular needs are given good support and the school calls upon the help of external agencies appropriately. Good assessment records maintain a clear and accurate picture of the progress of pupils with special educational needs and provide a firm basis for their effective guidance and support.

The school has good arrangements for helping new pupils to settle into school. Parents particularly appreciate the good informal contact they have with the reception teacher on a daily basis and the opportunities which the school provides for them to see their children at work; this helps parents to feel in touch and children to feel secure.

The school values pupils' views and regularly consults them through circle-time discussions and through questionnaires. The school council is still in the process of development and as yet only includes pupils in Years 5 and 6. Council members have conducted surveys and regularly meet with the headteacher to discuss issues. The school has responded to pupils' requests for playground equipment.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has satisfactory links with parents. Links with the community are very good and links with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with the community enrich pupils' education well
- There are many good opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school
- There are some weaknesses in communication between home and school

- The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA) provides very good support for the school.

Commentary

The school has very well-established links with its local parish. The local priest is a regular and popular visitor to the school. Pupils also benefit from the many good sporting links which the school has with the community and with other schools. The school has started a major project with the local Leonard Cheshire Home. This draws on expertise from many different community agencies and groups and will particularly benefit pupils in Year 4 who are helping with the plans for “The Heart Project”.

Parents are very supportive of their children’s education and there is high attendance at parents’ evenings. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed of individual targets and progress, and have good opportunities to play a full part in the process of review and support. Annual reports on pupils’ progress are satisfactory. Reports on mathematics, English and science include suggestions on how pupils can improve their work and also the national curriculum levels which they are working at. The format of reports means that some subjects are not reported on separately, for example, history and geography are reported together in one paragraph and art and design and design technology are reported together in another. The school plans to alter the format of reports to allow separate reporting for these subjects.

Only a minority of parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire or came to the meeting. However, on the basis of the results of these, of letters received and of conversations held with parents during the inspection it is clear that, although a large majority of parents are very supportive of the school, a significant minority have a range of concerns relating to communication and information. For example, parents expressed concerns about the way that reading records and homework diaries are used by the school. The school recognises that these are used inconsistently by different teachers and that there needs to be greater consistency.

The school provides many good opportunities for parents to be involved in its life. Parents of younger pupils value the easy informal communication they have with their children’s teachers. Numerous parents and parishioners attend school mass or other celebrations. The school values the help which many parents provide in classrooms. The PTFA is a dynamic group which puts on regular events and provides useful funds for the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of both leadership and management is good. Governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher’s good leadership and very good financial management have brought about key improvements needed to raise achievement for all pupils.
- Other senior staff support the headteacher well in promoting effective teamwork and a very good climate for learning across the school.
- Whilst the school is strongly committed to improvement, its development planning is not always based on a rigorous analysis and evaluation of the present position.
- Very good new appointments, strengthened by excellent induction arrangements, are a very positive influence on the quality of teaching and learning.
- All leaders provide excellent role models for pupils and other staff.
- The school puts a high priority on pupils achieving well, but the systems to check on this are not yet fully secure in all key areas.

Commentary

The headteacher leads the school well. Since taking up his post two years ago, he has successfully guided the school through a difficult process of development. His high aspirations and very clear educational vision are at the heart of the school. They give coherence and direction to change. They also promote teamwork and unity of purpose because the vision is shared, by staff and governors alike, through consultation and reflection. The focus is on spiritual values and personal fulfilment through rich and exciting learning experiences in which pupils have active and creative roles, and can achieve their individual best. The headteacher manages necessary change with determination and skill. The ambitious improvements made to the school's accommodation and security reflect enterprise and single-mindedness in raising and managing significant funding. As a result, teachers and pupils now work in conditions that promote a very good climate for learning and a sense of pride. The decision to employ specialist teachers of dance and music exemplifies another successful thrust of improvement and are a strategy to aid achievement. The expertise and excitement that these teachers bring to these areas enrich the curriculum and inspire boys and girls with a sense of what they can achieve. At the same time, this development reduces workloads and enables teachers to see how they could develop their own work in the creative subjects.

Other senior staff support the headteacher wholeheartedly; manage their areas of responsibility well, and provide excellent role models for their pupils and colleagues. They have worked very hard to maintain the quality and measured pace of improvement during a period of significant staffing change. They promote professional development of staff, with a clear focus on achieving agreed ways of working. New teachers are quickly into their full stride because they are strongly supported, both by the warm team spirit of other staff, and by excellent arrangements that enable them to concentrate on enhancing pupils' learning and their own skills. As a result of all this, the school is becoming a richer and more vibrant place where pupils see learning as enjoyable and success as an achievable challenge.

The school is committed to self-evaluation and has developed a range of systems by which to measure both the quality of the education it offers, and the achievements of its pupils. These systems vary in both style and effectiveness. The headteacher uses a good mix of formal and informal methods to monitor the quality of teaching. This makes his observations more frequent and his feedback more informed, friendly and continuous. Procedures for gathering information about pupils' attainment and progress are rigorous in English, mathematics, science and special educational needs, but relatively weak elsewhere. Also the analysis of all this information is not always searching enough to identify important issues, such as patterns of undemanding work and consequent underachievement for the more able pupils in some areas.

The school uses the evidence it gains from self-evaluation to inform its strategic planning. The improvement plan has good status within the school; reflects most of its current needs and concerns, and is helping to raise standards. Training and spending are linked to the plan, and staff monitor progress at regular 'reflection meetings' that reinforce shared understandings and teamwork. However, each plan tends to be a one-year document, and the success of the actions taken is too seldom measured by their effect on standards. Also the lack of a rigorous annual or bi-annual review of improvement means that the priorities of the next plan are not based on a clear and sound understanding of the present position. These factors have led to an unsatisfactory situation in ICT, and to important oversights in areas such as writing and practical science.

The governors share and reinforce the headteacher's ambitious vision for the school and have given staunch support to several major developments. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties, for example, in monitoring with the school, the implementation of the school's Race Relations policy, and work hard to strengthen the school's links with the church and its community. Whilst a good structure of sub-committees and individual roles involves governors directly with different aspects of the school, they have a limited understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. This makes them too dependent on the headteacher as a source of information, and restricts their ability to challenge the school's plans and performance.

Financial information

Very good financial management helps the school to achieve the priorities it identifies. With good support from the finance committee, the headteacher manages the budget very well. He mixes great skill in raising funds with astute use of the principles of best value to achieve significant improvements at very competitive prices. The school's very efficient administrator makes a very strong contribution to the effective management of the budget, just as she does to the smooth running of the school generally. Consequently, as the following table shows, the school's finances are in a far healthier state than when the school was last inspected.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	495,078	Balance from previous year	7,350
Total expenditure	500,806	Balance carried forward to the next	1,622
Expenditure per pupil	2,862		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good overall and children achieve well. The reception class is well organised and provides a stimulating and high quality environment in which children begin their school life. Provision is enhanced by the new building and this provides good accommodation to meet the requirements of the areas of learning effectively. The class teacher has established very good links with parents who appreciate the warm welcome that they receive. The very good relationships that exist in the reception class provide children with a secure environment and ensure that they settle into school life well. Children's good induction into school is enhanced by the positive links between home and school and this partnership is maintained as children move into Year 1. Ongoing observational assessment is a strength of the Foundation Stage and children's progress is well recorded and used to plan activities that meet children's needs. On some occasions the needs of children who are more able are not planned for explicitly; however, this is an area for development that has been recognised by the school. The Foundation Stage is led and managed well and all staff work together as an effective team to ensure that provision is of a good quality. This is exemplified by the very good partnership with an initial teacher training student who worked as an effective part of the team during the week of the inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted very well across all the areas of learning
- They work and play together well; children have very good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is very good.

Commentary

The very good relationships that exist in the Foundation Stage are an important feature of the safe environment in which children learn. As a result, children settle quickly and well into school and they enjoy the many opportunities that they have to play and work together. Teaching is good overall. All staff know the children very well and they have very high expectations of them. In return children respond by showing very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour. The children's confidence is boosted very well by the praise and encouragement that is given to each child. All adults who work with children in the Foundation Stage, including students, provide very good role models and aid them well in the development of their personal skills and good levels of independence. For example, children register their presence themselves as they come into school; no time is lost and they immediately begin their learning. But when it is time to move on, children are well focussed as they tidy up effectively to 'Old Macdonald had a farm'. So the beginning of the day ensures that children know their learning will be fun. As a result, all children, including those who have special educational needs, achieve very well and the majority are likely to exceed the goals they are expected to reach by the end of Foundation Stage.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Practical activities engage children in their learning effectively
- Children's speaking and listening skills are promoted well through all the areas of learning
- Support assistants and students provide very effective support for children's learning.

Commentary

The quality of teaching is good overall. The class teacher plans a range of practical activities to ensure that learning is fun for all children. For example, children practiced saying initial sounds of 'e' and 'h' whilst accompanied by actions that they found amusing. Objects beginning with 'e' and 'h' were then used in 'Kim's game' and children had to guess which object had been removed when they closed their eyes and what sound it began with! Similarly children were keen to provide instructions, such as 'put a scarf on' and 'wear a hat', to label a picture of a child so that others would know what to wear outdoors. Such activities develop children's reading and writing skills well but they also promote children's thinking skills and this aids their overall achievement. Children's skills in speaking and listening are developed well through the good opportunities that are available for them through all the areas of learning. All staff work hard to promote these skills by asking very good questions and promoting good opportunities for speaking and listening by taking part in role play, for example in the 'Sacred Heart Fire Station'. All children show very good attitudes to their learning and are supported very well by well-briefed support staff. As a result all children achieve well overall, including those who have special educational needs and the majority are likely to meet the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for developing mathematical skills are integrated into many activities.
- A good range of strategies is used to encourage mathematical understanding.

Commentary

Mathematical skills are developed well across a range of activities and so this makes mathematical learning fun. For example, in the outside area, children used large bricks for building and counting across, up and down. Good teaching ensured that children achieved well by the adult modelling how children might organise methods of counting the bricks so that they arrived at an accurate total. Children are confident to identify which groups of bricks have more or have less and they develop the use of language such as 'bigger than' to describe shape, position and size. Practical activities aid children's understanding of number, shape and space and the good balance between adult direction and children's independent learning ensures that all children achieve as well as they can. In addition, all children receive very good support from teaching assistants and this impacts positively on pupils' learning and enjoyment. The majority of children are, therefore, likely to meet the goals that they are expected to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of practical activities is used to stimulate children's curiosity.
- New experiences are well prepared and well led to aid children's good achievement.

Commentary

The reception classroom provides an exciting environment in which children are encouraged to investigate and learn. Opportunities for them to use the computer are readily available and children are confident to use the mouse. Photographic evidence shows that the good range of experiences children have had include a 'sensory walk', learning how animals move, investigating large boxes that are created into ramps down which cars are rolled and digging and investigating in the garden area outside. During the inspection, the children worked well with the student to investigate 'roads' and direction. In role-play they considered the best way to get their fire engine from the fire station to named streets such as 'Grass Street'. Carefully prompted and encouraged by the student who worked with them, children enjoyed the adventure of investigating which way to go. Such examples of good teaching and well-planned activities stimulate children's curiosity and develop their observational skills. As a result, all children, including those with special educational needs achieve well and the majority are likely to reach the goals that they are expected to reach by the end of their time in Foundation Stage.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good overall**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy activities and show good levels of concentration.
- Outdoor provision contributes well to their physical development.
- In physical education (PE) lessons, children are constrained and get hot because they have not changed for physical activity.

Commentary

All children develop their manipulative skills well through the wide range of opportunities presented to them to use, for example, scissors, pencils, paintbrushes, and small construction equipment. Children enjoy these activities and concentrate well. Children achieve well because activities are well structured and teaching is good. The outdoor play area is also well organised and resourced with both equipment and adult support. As a result, the children have good opportunities to develop further their physical skills by using large play and climbing equipment and they achieve well. In the PE lesson observed, children did not change out of their everyday clothing and so they were constrained to a degree when they warmed up and did stretching exercises. The lesson was well organised, however, and the good modelling by the teacher, to demonstrate how to throw bean bags and balls underarm, contributed greatly to the children's good achievement. As a result of the quality of provision, children are likely to attain the goals that they are expected to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of practical activities is provided which is appropriately linked to the other areas of learning.
- Children's work is valued and this aids their confidence.
- Specialist teaching, aided by the reception staff, contributes well to children's enjoyment of musical activities.

Commentary

Good teaching and planning ensure that the children have good opportunities to draw, paint, and make pictures and models from a variety of media. The children's work is linked well to other areas of learning as, for example, in the children's work on fire safety. Leading up to bonfire night, children mixed paints to make orange and other colours that showed a bonfire. Children's work is celebrated, for example, in their class assembly to which parents and the local priest are invited and play a key role; they held up their paintings with pride. Children enjoy musical activities and responded very well to the specialist music teacher. They played their instruments with enjoyment and many knew which was made from metal or wood. They listened well to music from the 'Carnival of the animals' and appreciated the mood of the music as they imagined the 'lion' walking down the corridor and joined in the roar with gusto at the appropriate time. Children enjoy all their creative activities; they have very good attitudes to learning and this supports their achievement which is good. As a result, the majority are likely to reach the expected goals by the end of their time in Foundation Stage.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in reading.
- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good.
- Overall achievement in writing is unsatisfactory, particularly for the more able pupils.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- The poor quality of the junior library limits opportunities for older pupils to extend and use their reading skills to support their wider learning.

Commentary

In relation to national standards, attainment is average overall and similar to that found by the last inspection. It is higher in reading than in writing and higher for girls than for boys, though the school's well-directed efforts to raise boys' achievement in writing are closing these gaps. By a more rigorous use of assessment information to track individual progress, set targets and identify where improvements are needed, the school strives to enable pupils to achieve as well as they can. Fluctuations in results from year to year can be traced to variations in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. These pupils do well in relation to their difficulties but do not always reach the level expected for their age. As a result of the school's drive for improvement, underlying standards are rising.

Standards in speaking and listening are average by Year 6, and achievement is satisfactory. The use of assessment and targets is relatively limited in this area. Pupils achieve well when teachers create good opportunities for them to talk together in small groups to solve demanding problems and explore or agree ideas. In one lesson achievement was very good because of the teacher's great skill in developing pupils' talk, by using questions that encouraged and challenged them to explain, share, develop and evaluate their ideas and extend their learning skills. In some lessons, however, teaching reinforces passive rather than active roles for pupils, and they have too few opportunities to extend their answers and reason things out. This makes it harder to raise standards in writing. Teachers do not always put enough emphasis on the quality of pupils' spoken English, although they set a high standard in their own speech.

Pupils achieve well in most aspects of reading. By Year 6, the great majority achieve technical competence in the basic skills of reading, and most read with understanding. For example, in discussion of the opening page of an unfamiliar story, higher and average attaining pupils could

describe its effect on them and explain how the author's choice of language created that effect. However, the same pupils were less able to identify the typical feature of an information text, and explain why they were typical and how to use them. Achievement is limited in this area of reading. This is not helped by the poor accommodation and resources of the junior library which deny pupils opportunities to extend and use their reading skills independently to aid their studies in other subjects.

In writing, overall standards are below average and achievement over time is unsatisfactory, particularly for more able pupils of different ages. The methods used to develop skills in handwriting, spelling and punctuation are strong feature of provisions, and almost all pupils achieve well in these technical skills. The school's effort to raise boys' interest and achievement in writing is also succeeding. Other developments reflect the school's recognition that writing is a continuing priority for improvement. In Year 6, pupils' writing is typically short and based strictly on a given model. Within these limits, work is sound enough and pupils grasp the distinctive features of writing in relation to different purposes and effects. However, few pupils achieve the more complex sentence structures and more adventurous choices of vocabulary normally expected of pupils of this age. Pupils lack opportunities to develop independent use of the different models they learn, by planning and drafting writing for their own different learning purposes. This seriously restricts the achievement of the more able pupils, because they are seldom challenged to develop a command of longer texts by controlling more extensive information and greater variation of language. Truly imaginative use of a model is rare, for example in writing a sequel faithful to the style of a favourite story.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and sometimes very good. Pupils achieve well in most lessons, though this is not always sustained over time. Teachers plan lessons with reference to clear learning objectives. These are usually kept in view during the lesson but are seldom revisited at the end in a way which involves pupils in reflecting on what and how they have learned, and on what they find difficult and why. Common strengths in teaching are:

- the good planning and support that enable pupils with special educational needs to overcome their difficulties and participate in the lesson;
- the very good working relationships that create a strong climate for learning based on a warm valuing of all pupils;
- some lessons were particularly effective because these strengths combined with the teachers' great skill in adjusting the challenge precisely to the individual need, and in ensuring that activities in reading, writing, speaking and listening all supported each other.

Some common shortcomings in lessons are:

- frequent lack of effective challenge for the more able pupils;
- inconsistent use of marking as a tool for improvement;
- inconsistent use of homework diaries to record expectations clearly;
- weak use of ICT to support learning, although this became a strength where teachers had use of an interactive whiteboard.

English is in capable hands and well managed. The co-ordinator is committed to higher achievement for all. She works systematically to identify what works and what does not, and to identify and tackle causes of weaker performance.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

Overall, English and the rest of the curriculum do not support each other well enough, although there are examples of good practice, particularly in spoken English. Teachers do not challenge pupils often enough to stretch their reading and writing skills to achieve new learning in subjects such as science and geography. The lack of computers in classrooms and of a good junior library magnifies this problem. Writing in other subjects is not shaped by agreed policy or matched to pupils' actual capabilities as writers.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enthusiasm of teachers for the subject is reflected in the enthusiasm of pupils.
- The development of mental arithmetic is good.
- Teachers use direct questioning well during lessons to assess pupils' understanding.
- Opportunities for problem solving are sometimes missed.

The standards attained by pupils throughout are in line with those expected for their age overall and achievement is good. There is evidence of some variation in attainment from year group to year group and this is due to the smaller than average number of pupils and the variation in numbers of pupils who have special educational needs.

The quality of teaching is good overall with examples of very good teaching having been observed during the inspection. Strengths are evident, for example, in Year 2 where teaching is characterised by a clear, logical sequence of tasks delivered at a good pace with an increasing degree of challenge for all pupils. An enthusiasm for the subject is matched by a clear sense of purpose and as a result pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well. Similarly, in Year 5 the teacher makes very effective use of a "brainstorming" technique that successfully develops pupils' ability to quickly recall units of length and measurement. The enthusiasm of teachers for the subject is reflected in the enthusiasm of pupils who willingly work collaboratively. In generating these very good attitudes to learning, teachers are promoting good achievement across the school because pupils look forward to lessons and are very keen to respond. Teaching assistants are also very well deployed to aid pupils' learning and make a particular contribution in their work to the achievement of those pupils who have special educational needs.

Teachers plan well overall and make good use of the national numeracy strategy. However, opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to apply their knowledge to real life problems. All lessons feature rigorous mental arithmetic introductions and teachers use a variety of strategies to successfully develop quick responses. This emphasis on mental arithmetic is effectively contributing to the confidence pupils develop in applying the four rules of number and achievement is good. However, some more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to achieve at a higher level by extending their rate of work and the degree of difficulty in that work.

Teachers use direct questioning well during and at the end of lessons to assess pupils' understanding. This assessment is used to modify future planning and target pupils for extra support and development. As a result of this support, pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Pupils' overall progress is tracked half termly and pupils work towards an end of year target. However, pupils individual targets are often too generalised and are not consistently specific enough to aid individual progress. Pupils' work is marked diligently but does not effectively give pupils the information that they need to improve. Leadership of the subject is good overall and the subject leader has a firm vision for the future development of the subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum.

Although there are some examples of good practice of mathematics used across the curriculum, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills beyond the mathematics lesson. Where good examples exist, a clear link is seen between subjects; for example, in Year 4 a science project incorporated numeracy skills well and pupils studied the relationship of the length of bones to age. This project involved a variety of measurement, hypothesis and analysis. As a result, pupils were able to make accurate estimations of length and propose solutions to problems of area. Teachers also make good use of the 'smartboards' in their lessons, but the lack of ICT resources restricts much of what staff could do to promote mathematical skills through this subject.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- There is good emphasis on the use of specific technical language.
- There are insufficient opportunities for scientific investigation.
- Some more able pupils are insufficiently challenged to achieve at a higher level.

Commentary

The standards attained by pupils throughout school are average. Trends over time and pupils' work seen during the inspection support this judgement. However, inspection evidence indicated that pupils achieve well over time in relation to their capability. For example, the current Year 5 is a larger cohort and the overall good achievement of these pupils observed during the inspection is more representative of the school's performance over time.

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. Teaching assistants were well deployed to support learning and contributed effectively to pupils' achievement. Where teaching was seen to be unsatisfactory, inadequate resources and a lack of a clear and shared focus to the lesson meant that learning was not as good as it should have been. Overall, however, teachers deliver well planned lessons with enthusiasm and confidence and there is an appropriate balance between discussion and pupils' independent work. Pupils are keen and attentive learners; for example, during a Year 6 lesson, pupils gasped in amazement when clean water emerged from a filtration process and all pupils maintained high levels of interest, concentration and attention. Some more able pupils, however, are not sufficiently challenged to achieve at a higher level particularly in the quality of work they are required to produce.

There is a good emphasis on the use of specific technical language during lessons. All teachers clearly identify key scientific vocabulary prior to lessons and they take great care to establish pupils' understanding of that vocabulary. As a result, pupils can accurately describe the characteristics of a process in a scientific style. For example, Year 2 pupils are able to describe the characteristics of a variety of animals and plants when grouping and classifying; Year 3 pupils accurately use transparent, opaque and translucent to classify a variety of everyday objects and Year 6 pupils make good decisions about soluble and insoluble materials when observing the filtration process.

The focus on the development of pupils' language skills within the subject makes a strong contribution towards removing potential barriers to learning. Teachers continually revise and test pupils' understanding of vocabulary and this gives them the confidence to use scientific terminology. However, a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, lesson observations during the inspection and discussion with pupils indicates that there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to conduct and devise scientific investigations. As a result, pupils were not able to describe accurately the processes of fair testing, hypothesis and investigation. Current resources for investigational activities are inadequate. Despite these shortcomings, the subject leader has a clear vision for the subject and is committed to its development in order to raise standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attainment is below the level expected for their age.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Lack of computers seriously restricts pupils' opportunities to develop and use their ICT skills to support their learning generally.

Commentary

The previous inspection report required action to improve provision in three areas of work in ICT, in order to raise standards. Improvements were needed to ensure that:

- pupils have frequent planned opportunities to develop their skills in using computers and other technology;
- teachers receive support and training to develop their ability to teach ICT;
- the school is able to identify weaknesses in pupils' skills and set targets for improvement.

Whilst progress has been made on each of these issues, it has not been enough to achieve consistently satisfactory levels in provision and standards.

Standards vary between year groups because of variations in classroom resources and in teachers' confidence and competence with ICT. Standards also vary unacceptably between the different branches of the subject because of variations in the amount and continuity of coverage. A probing discussion with a group of Year 6 pupils revealed very clear evidence of unevenness along their learning journey in ICT through the school. They could not readily recollect work that involved: using simple branching databases, using control, using probes and sensors to gather data, or processing digital images from a camera. In other areas their understandings were relatively strong, but they could not say what the letters ICT stand for, and their familiarity with computers and the Internet seemed to depend as much on experiences outside school as on those within. Observations of work in ICT in a variety of lessons confirm this picture.

The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was satisfactory overall. It ranged from satisfactory to very good, according to the quality of the technology available and the teacher's skill in using it. Interactive whiteboards have been installed in two classrooms, and these are effectively used to teach subjects as different as mathematics, English and history, as well as ICT. Their strength is that they enable pupils to develop their skills in ICT as they participate actively in the learning process. Other teachers make sound use of a digital projector. However, the ratio of computers to pupils is far below the level currently accepted in primary schools. As a result, pupils have few opportunities to practise the skills taught in lessons. Teachers carefully regulate access to ensure equality within school, but provision is not equal to that found nationally. This restricts both the range and frequency of opportunities open to pupils and limits the level of pupil participation and learning quality, and again shortage of computers restricts practice and use of new skills. The recently installed network facility is not yet improving the situation, and the school has not developed a website. Overall, the current resources in hardware and software are too patchy in type and quality to promote coherence, breadth and continuity in pupils' learning.

The co-ordinator is hard-working and enthusiastic, and has good knowledge of the subject. Her efforts to monitor and evaluate work in ICT are systematic and revealing, but the profiling method used is too limited to identify specific points for development. Nevertheless, the process gives her a shrewd understanding of the present situation and a clear vision of the situation she wants to achieve. However, the journey from one to the other cannot realistically be undertaken without significant development of the resource base for ICT, or without further work on the issues identified by the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum.

Teachers' planning shows clear evidence of their efforts to use ICT to support learning across the curriculum. Their use of interactive whiteboard and digital projectors enhances learning in several subjects. However, this use is not yet consistent and secure across the school. More seriously, the lack of computers and other technology means that pupils have an incomplete range of ICT skills and have too few opportunities to use ICT as a tool for learning in different contexts.

HUMANITIES

Insufficient evidence was available during the time of the inspection to make secure judgements on provision in history and geography and so these subjects have been sampled.

Work in **history** was sampled and no firm overall judgement can be made on provision.

The evidence of pupils' work and of the two lessons observed points clearly to a number of strengths:

- Pupils and teachers share a strong interest in learning about topics as different as Ancient Egypt and Victorian England.
- Teachers make good use of different sources of evidence and of challenging questions to involve pupils in investigating, discussing and interpreting evidence.
- Pupils enjoy this 'detective' work and happily apply their knowledge to new evidence to consider its social implications.
- Pupils achieved well in both lessons because they were highly motivated by the interest-value of the topic and resources, and also because the teachers enhanced and exploited this interest by giving pupils space and challenge to think and talk their way towards higher understandings of history.
- All pupils, but particularly the more able, lack opportunities to further their learning through writing.

Insufficient evidence was available during the time of the inspection to make a secure judgement on provision in **geography**. This is because the subject was not planned to be taught at the time of the inspection and so there was insufficient evidence of children's work to comment securely on curriculum coverage or pupils' achievement.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

During the time of the inspection, there was insufficient evidence to make secure judgements on provision in art and design, design and technology and physical education and so these subjects have been sampled.

Only one lesson was observed in **art and design** where children in Year 1 enjoyed the experience of working with a teaching assistant who has considerable expertise in the subject. They clearly enjoyed the opportunity to collect leaves from the environment and to weave them into a large picture and then to create a 'sticky mat' with the rest of the foliage that was collected, being mindful of colour and shape. What was clear from the lesson was that the adult's enthusiasm and expertise enhanced the pupils' enjoyment. The school sets great store by providing creative opportunities for all pupils and so has deployed this member of staff to work with all classes to enhance provision in the arts. Pupils in Year 6 also confirmed in discussion that they too enjoyed the opportunities they had to be creative in art and design lessons.

Only two lessons were observed in **design and technology** and this contributed to the sample of the subject along with discussion with pupils. The school follows a nationally published scheme of work. Pupils therefore have the opportunity to design, for example, mechanisms for a purpose in Year 4, as seen in cards and books that have 'flip flap' parts, whilst younger pupils in Year 3 design a photograph frame. It is clear that pupils enjoy their work and benefit from the additional support provided during lessons by a teaching assistant with an interest and enthusiasm for creativity.

No games or gymnastic lessons were observed during the inspection in **physical education**; however, two dance lessons were observed that were taught very well by a specialist teacher. . These lessons were characterised by high levels of energy, pace, challenge, creativity and enjoyment. Pupils achieved well because the teacher was confident with the subject and very well prepared. The school provides a varied range of sporting activities and pupils benefit from expert coaching. These include gymnastics, athletics and rugby league. As a result of these opportunities, pupils have an enthusiasm for sport and achieve well in local sporting events.

Music

Provision in music is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very good achievement is helped by the specialist teacher's ability to challenge pupils to do their best
- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular musical activities.

Commentary

As part of the school's focus on the creative arts, a music specialist has been employed to teach music throughout the school. He also holds the leadership and management role for the subject and is supported by another specialist teacher who aids with further teaching to consolidate work covered. Teachers also join lessons on occasions to keep up to date with what the children are learning and in the case of Year 1, the teacher and teaching assistant enhance the overall effectiveness of teaching and learning in lessons.

As a result of the co-ordinators very good subject knowledge, teaching is very focussed, well planned and very well paced. High expectations are the norm and as a result, all pupils achieve very well and attain standards that are above expectations for their age. For example, pupils in Year 2 listened attentively to 'The Sugar Plum Fairy' moving their arms to keep the beat. They recognised the difference between the beat and the rhythm and this concept is developed well as pupils move through school. By the time pupils are in Year 6, they understand what a 'drone' is and recognise a melody and 'ostenato'. The use of musical specific language is second nature to pupils and they transfer their musical skills very well to their own compositions, which they produce in collaboration with others.

The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, including a choir and guitar ensemble. Pupils clearly enjoy the opportunity to sing and this is evident during assembly times when music is again celebrated well. As a result, music makes a significant contribution to the provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Only one lesson was observed in **personal, social and health education and citizenship** during the inspection and so it is not possible to make an overall judgement on provision. In the circle time lesson that was observed in Year 5, strengths were evident in the high level of pupil participation, consideration for others and well argued debate. In this lesson, the teacher modelled role-play and this was very effective in raising pupils' awareness of their responsibilities towards others. In addition, from discussion with pupils and through other lessons observed, it is clear that the school contributes well to pupils' personal development through a very good range of learning opportunities that enrich the curriculum. Such provision includes extra curricular activities, such as the 'Kudos' club, the focus of which is to develop pupils' self esteem. Pupils in Sacred Heart School clearly know the importance of being a thoughtful citizen.

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)	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
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).