

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SS ALBAN AND STEPHEN RC JUNIOR SCHOOL**

St Albans, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117491

Headteacher: Mrs Helen Hill

Lead inspector: Mr Colin Henderson

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005

Inspection number: 267619

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior  
School category: Voluntary aided  
Age range of pupils: 7 – 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 222

School address: Cecil Road  
St Albans  
Hertfordshire  
Postcode: AL1 5EG

Telephone number: 01727 866668  
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Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of Mrs Una Oatham  
governors:

Date of previous 24<sup>th</sup> May 1999  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ss Alban and Stephen RC School is an average-sized junior school. The number of pupils is increasing and they come from a wide area and from a broad range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The majority of pupils are from white, United Kingdom ethnic backgrounds with 40 per cent coming from a very broad range of ethnic minorities. Sixty-five pupils speak English as an additional language, with five at the early stages of English language acquisition. Many of these pupils join the school after Year 3 and there are high levels of pupil mobility in some year groups. Twenty-two per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is just above the national average. These include a broad range of learning, communication, sensory, emotional and behavioural needs. Two pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs. Attainment on entry is usually above average, although the attainment of the current group of Year 3 pupils is below average as it has a higher level of lower attaining pupils than in other year groups. The school has experienced a high level of staff change in the last two years. The school achieved Investors in

People accreditation and Activemark in 2003 and is involved in the Primary Leadership Programme.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23742	Colin Henderson	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology; history; geography; physical education; personal, social and health education and citizenship.
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector	
32768	Sonia Bosworth	Team inspector	Mathematics; science; art and design; design and technology; English as an additional language.
26945	Sylvia Gatehouse	Team inspector	English; music; special educational needs.

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## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>9</b>
Standards achieved in subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>12</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>32</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school. It is a friendly and harmonious school community that has a strong, caring Catholic ethos. The school provides a very good quality of education with a rich and varied curriculum. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to work. They attain well above average standards by the end of Year 6. Their very good achievement owes much to the good and often very good teaching and the strong and influential leadership and management. The school gives very good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve very well and by the end of Year 6 they attain well above average standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- The very good leadership and management of the headteacher, supported by an influential deputy, a very effective governing body and a strong staff team, are key elements in improving standards and the quality of education provided.
- Teaching and learning are good overall. They are often very good, and at times excellent, in Year 6.
- All pupils are included in a very good range of interesting learning activities.
- Teachers do not use assessment information consistently to let pupils know how to improve their work.
- The strong links that have been developed with parents, the local community and other schools enhance pupils' learning significantly.
- A small number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. All the issues for improvement have been very effectively tackled, especially the quality of teaching and standards in ICT. The school has maintained its very good ethos and improved the standards of attainment and leadership and management.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### Year 6 results

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	B	B	A*	A
mathematics	C	A	A	B
science	B	A	A	B

*Key: A\* - very high; 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 **very good** overall, particularly in Year 6. The results of recent national tests show that Year 6 pupils attain standards that are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in English were in the top 5 per cent in 2004. When the school's performance is compared with similar schools on the basis of prior attainment, attainment is well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Inspectors found that these high standards are continuing with attainment in all three subjects being well above average. Standards in ICT are also well above average. They are above expected levels in history, geography, physical education and art and design and all pupils achieve well. Standards in design and technology and music are at least at expected levels and achievement is never less than satisfactory.

Most pupils start in Year 3 with above average attainment. They make good progress overall in their learning in Years 3 to 5 and their achievement is good. Year 6 pupils achieve very well and many make rapid progress, promoted by consistently high quality teaching. Boys and girls achieve equally as well. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and many achieve as well as their classmates. They benefit from very effective support in class and small group activities. Pupils with English as an additional language, many of whom join the school at times other than the start of Year 3, make very good progress overall as a result of very good support from teaching and learning support staff.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance levels are unsatisfactory. Punctuality is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall, and often very good. Teaching is particularly effective in Year 6 where teachers have consistently high expectations. Assessment is satisfactory overall. The procedures are good, although the information is not always used effectively to target improvement. The curriculum is very good and is enhanced by a very good range of enrichment activities. The school takes very good care of its pupils and supports them well. The very good links with parents, the local community and local schools enhance pupils' learning very successfully.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good** overall. The very good, influential leadership of the headteacher, supported by a very effective governing body, provides a very clear and purposeful direction to the work of the school. Management is good overall. There is a very strong team approach with good leadership in key subjects. A high level of recent staff changes has limited developments in the management of other subjects. Governance of the school is very good and the governing body very successfully ensures that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

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

Parents are very supportive of the school and are more than happy with the quality of education provided. In their questionnaires and comments, all parents agree that their children like school and make good progress. They particularly value the good leadership and management of the headteacher, the good teaching and the good range of activities. A small number felt that the school did not seek their views. Inspectors found that the school actively seeks parents' views and responds very positively to them. Extensive discussions with pupils show that they really like school and the very good range of exciting opportunities it offers. They indicate that it is a friendly school and bullying or bad behaviour are not concerns to them. They find that staff and other children are helpful and are confident that, if they have a worry, then they could approach an adult and it would be quickly sorted out.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Use assessment procedures consistently to inform pupils what they need to do to improve their work.
- Increase the attendance of the small number of pupils who do not attend school regularly enough.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects**

Pupils attain **well above** average standards overall, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils' achievement is **very good**.

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

- Pupils achieve very well overall and make rapid progress in their learning in Year 6.
- Pupils' very good basic skills are used well to support above average standards in other subjects.
- Very good support for pupils with English as an additional language, pupils from a traveller background and those with special educational needs helps them to make very good progress in their learning.
- Staff changes have restricted the development of pupils' skills and knowledge in aspects of design and technology and music.

#### **Commentary**

1. The results of national tests for pupils in Year 6 over the last four years show that standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. In 2004, the standards in English were in the top 5 per cent nationally. When the school's performance is compared with similar schools on the basis of prior attainment, attainment is well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools on the basis of free school meals eligibility, the picture is even stronger as standards are very high, in the top 5 per cent nationally. The school's trend of improvement is above the national trend and the proportion of pupils attaining above the nationally expected Level 4 in all three subjects is very high compared with the national average. The school considerably exceeded its target in 2004 for the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 in English and mathematics. Although a high proportion of pupils join the school after the start of Year 3, they settle quickly and achieve very well in national tests. Inspection findings confirm these well above average levels of attainment and the school is set well to maintain these high standards. It is likely to achieve, and probably exceed, its above average targets in both English and mathematics for the proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 and above in 2005.
2. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well. Boys and girls have equally positive attitudes to learning and benefit from good quality teaching overall. They make good progress in their learning in Years 3 to 5. The consistently high quality of teaching enables pupils to make very good progress in Year 6. Their achievement is very good and at times excellent. This helps to maintain the high standards of attainment. Pupils for whom English is an additional language

benefit from very good support from a support teacher and bilingual teaching assistants who work very effectively with class teachers to support individual pupils' needs. Many make remarkable progress and most attain the nationally expected level for Year 6 pupils in tests and some exceed this. The school works closely with a specialist support teacher to ensure that pupils from a traveller background receive very good support in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress towards their learning targets due mainly to the very effective support they receive when working in small groups with the co-ordinator and with teaching and support staff in class activities. Many attain standards similar to those expected for their age by the end of Year 6. The school has identified gifted and talented pupils and is beginning to introduce a broader range of opportunities to help them to achieve well and extend their skills and knowledge, for example in ICT.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.5 (28.3)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	29.4 (28.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.9 (31.2)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. Pupils receive a very good curriculum and use their very good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to achieve well in most subjects. Their achievement is never less than satisfactory. They achieve well above expected standards in ICT as a result of very effective specialist teaching and teachers' increased use of improved resources. Standards in history, geography and art and design are above nationally expected levels, supported by good teaching and strong links with other curriculum subjects. In physical education, pupils' achievement is good as they benefit from participating in a very good range of activities and some good specialist coaching. Standards in design and technology and music are broadly in line with expected levels. Aspects of pupils' skills and knowledge, for example, in planning and evaluation are not developed consistently. Staff changes have limited aspects of subject development. The school has identified these areas as development priorities and new subject co-ordinators are beginning to improve provision and standards.

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

The attitudes and behaviour of most pupils continue to be **good**. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good** and is reflected in their very good personal development. Attendance is **unsatisfactory**. Punctuality is **satisfactory** overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The behaviour of most pupils and their positive attitudes and eagerness to learn enable them to make very good progress.

- The very good relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves help to promote a productive learning environment.
- The very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes very effectively to their personal development, confidence and self-esteem.
- The attendance of a small number of pupils is unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

4. Both pupils and parents have very positive views about the school. Parents are pleased that their children are enthusiastic and enjoy school. They welcome the teachers' high expectations and feel this motivates their children to learn, helping them to develop mature attitudes and to become independent and responsible. The majority of pupils show positive attitudes to their learning and activities in school. They speak confidently and articulately about the various activities they are engaged in and specifically mention the headteacher '*who will stand up for you and support you if you are picked on... and the nice teachers and friendly school*'.
5. The behaviour of most pupils is very good both in lessons and around the school. During the Ash Wednesday Mass pupils behaved and responded impeccably. However, there are a small number of pupils with challenging behaviour and if they are not well managed they become restless, lose focus and occasionally disrupt lessons. Pupils generally respond well to incentives and the reward systems and speak enthusiastically about accumulating house points or receiving certificates and awards. Harmony is a strong feature of the school and pupils from various ethnic backgrounds work and play happily together. There is little evidence of bullying or oppressive behaviour in the school. Pupils feel confident that if any incidents do occur they will be sorted out very quickly.
6. The provision for pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is very well integrated into the school and curriculum and contributes effectively to pupils' personal development. Provision for spiritual development is very good and reflects the school's strong Christian ethos. The school uses opportunities well in assemblies and masses, through prayer, reflection and during lessons to develop pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness. Pupils show great respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
7. Moral development is very good. Pupils know right from wrong and are aware of the school procedures and Golden Rules. They have helped to devise their class rules and are fully aware of how their actions affect others. Pupils gain an awareness of others less fortunate than themselves and are involved in fund raising for various charities or helping distribute food parcels following harvest festivals. The good behaviour of most pupils in and around the school is a result of their developing self-discipline and is reflected in the absence of exclusions in the school.
8. Social development is very well developed and results in constructive relationships being forged between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils

themselves. This promotes a good working environment and makes a positive impact on achievement. Pupils accept responsibility willingly and undertake their tasks conscientiously. They volunteer readily, acting as class monitors or helping teachers at lunch times and before and after school. Older pupils know they need to behave well and set a good example as role models for the younger pupils. They undertake positions as house captains; have specific responsibilities and assist during services; and act as 'buddies' to new pupils to help them settle into school. The school council members are enthusiastic about the decisions they have made and the opportunity they have to help make changes around the school.

9. The school promote awareness of their own and others' cultures very well. This is celebrated through displays around the school and through visits and visitors. Musicians including African drummers, storytellers, theatre groups and trips to museums and art galleries help to promote cultural awareness. A well-established link with a school in the Gambia promotes an awareness of a different culture abroad. Awareness of life in their culturally diverse society is addressed through the 'One World' week organised each year involving pupils, parents and others from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils choose different cultures, and aspects of each of these - including the food, costumes and dances - are explored and celebrated. During Pentecost services, pupils from different backgrounds are encouraged to participate using their own languages.

### Attendance

10. Most pupils are happy to come to school and are eager to learn. The attendance levels of most pupils are good. However, there are a small number of pupils with a large number of absences, which affect the overall attendance rates and bring this down to below the national average. These absences are due to a number of reasons including parents taking their children on holiday in term time – sometimes for extended periods; a small number of pupils who are away for medical reasons; the absences at times of the traveller children; and a small number of pupils who have difficult home circumstances or do not like school. The level of unauthorised absences is less than the national average, although the school is sometimes authorising holidays in excess of ten days. Punctuality is satisfactory, with most parents bringing their children to school on time in the mornings. However, where there are problems, this is often a result of late taxis and traffic problems due to the long distances some pupils have to travel to get to school in the morning.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.7	School data:	0.2
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 school provides a **very good** quality of education. Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**. The curriculum is **very good**, enriched by a **very**

**good** range of extra-curricular activities. The day-to-day care of pupils is **very good**. Links with parents, the community and local schools are **very good**.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching contributes well to pupils' achievement, particularly in Year 6.
- Teachers' knowledge, enthusiasm and very effective use of resources help them to create a vibrant desire to learn in some lessons.
- The consistently good quality teaching of pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT and science underpins their good achievement in many subjects.
- Detailed planning and the good partnership with learning support staff help teachers to enable all pupils to achieve very well in a very good range of learning activities.
- Teachers do not use information consistently on how well pupils are doing to inform them what they need to improve.



## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	11 (34%)	14 (44%)	5 (16%)	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.*

11. Teaching and learning are good across the school. They are consistently very good, and at times excellent in Year 6. Teaching has improved very well since the last inspection when there was a high level of unsatisfactory teaching. The good quality of teaching is a significant factor in how well standards have risen over time.
12. Teachers plan in detail, particularly for lessons in the key subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT. They make very good use of ability sets in literacy in Years 4 to 6 and in numeracy in all year groups to provide a very good range of activities to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Most teachers identify clearly the key learning objectives for each lesson and they share with the pupils what they want them to achieve. This gives a clear focus to the learning activity and helps teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching. Most teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subjects and build pupils' skills successfully on prior learning. This is particularly effective in English and ICT where very good, and occasionally excellent teaching helps pupils, especially in Year 6, to rapidly improve their key skills, for example, in writing, and to apply them very well to achieve good standards in other subjects.
13. Teachers provide a very interesting range of learning activities and stimulate pupils' interest and enjoyment, for example, by arranging theatre trips to extend pupils' understanding of the styles of different authors. In the best lessons, particularly in Year 6, teachers use their own enthusiasm for the subject to encourage all pupils to participate fully and contribute their ideas confidently, knowing that they will be noted and valued. They sustain pupils' attention and concentration by maintaining a brisk pace and reminding pupils how much they expect to be achieved by the end of the lesson. Teachers make good use of questions to encourage pupils' involvement. Some use follow-up questions very well to extend pupils' knowledge, especially that of higher-attaining Year 6 pupils. However, this is not as consistently effective in some other years as teachers do not always expect higher-attaining pupils to use their knowledge and understanding to explain their answers, for example, when explaining the results of their scientific investigations. In the very small number of lessons where teaching is not effective, teachers do not always have a specific learning objective for the lesson and pupils are not clear about what they are trying to achieve. This results in some pupils losing their concentration, becoming inattentive and limits their achievement.
14. Teachers work well with learning support staff to help all pupils to achieve very well. This partnership is particularly effective in ensuring that all pupils are fully

involved in group activities. Learning support staff know what the lesson objective is and are used well to support groups of pupils of different abilities. Pupils benefit significantly from very good quality individual support from teaching and support staff, although the partnership is not always as effective in ensuring that pupils are equally involved in whole class introductory and end-of-lesson feedback activities. Those pupils whose home language is not English are very well supported in school. A support teacher works with these pupils, either in the classroom or withdraws pupils to extend their English vocabulary effectively. The focus of these sessions is planned very well with class teachers so that vocabulary is linked to current lessons. Part-time bilingual classroom assistants support pupils very well in lessons. The very good subject knowledge and organisation of the co-ordinator for special educational needs ensure that these pupils make very good progress in their small group activities. She runs her groups at a good pace with plenty of different activities that sustain pupils' interest and support their concentration. The close liaison between her and the teaching assistants, who work closely with these pupils during the rest of the week, helps them to achieve very well in whole class activities. .

15. The school has established good procedures for assessing pupils' progress, especially in English, mathematics and science. The results of pupils' achievements are recorded for each pupil and their future likely attainment is plotted as they move from one year to the next. Teachers review these targets early in the school year and check on pupils' progress during the year to identify if any remedial action needs to be taken, for example by withdrawing small groups for specific help. However, procedures to regularly review the predicted attainment targets for each year group, especially those who have had a high level of pupil mobility, are not consistently developed. Day-to-day assessment is conducted by class teachers when marking pupils' work and discussing their performance with them. The quality of teachers' marking varies considerably. When it is good, teachers are clear in indicating to pupils what to do next to improve their work further. However, too often teachers point out the weaknesses, although do not let pupils know what they need to do to improve them.
16. The school has recently introduced good practice to help pupils evaluate their learning for themselves at the end of lessons by re-visiting the learning objectives and deciding whether or not they have reached them. The school has improved their assessment procedures since the last inspection. It has introduced some new initiatives, for example group improvement targets, which are beginning to use the information more successfully to focus on what pupils specifically need to improve. However, teachers are not yet using improvement targets consistently that are known and understood by pupils, frequently reviewed and their progress towards them evaluated to inform future teaching. This does not ensure a consistently rigorous focus on improvement.

## **The curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is **very good**. There are **very good** opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences through extra-curricular activities. The school's **good** accommodation and resources support pupils' learning well.

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

- The curriculum is organised very effectively and contributes very well to pupils' achievements.
- Equal opportunity for all pupils is central to the work of the school.
- An extensive range of visits, visitors and club activities increases pupils' interest and enjoyment in their learning.
- Specialist teachers and teaching assistants enhance the quality of the curriculum very well.
- The accommodation provides good learning spaces, but the library is underused.

## Commentary

17. The school has improved the quality of the curriculum very well since the last inspection. It provides a very good curriculum that meets all statutory requirements. The school uses national guidance and published schemes effectively to help teachers to plan clear and detailed guidance about what is to be taught each term and the specific skills, knowledge and understanding that are to be learned in each subject. Subject development is prioritised efficiently to make an impact upon teaching and pupils' learning. For example, the school is currently developing its provision for design and technology, under the leadership of a new co-ordinator. Literacy and numeracy have a high focus in each year group's timetable. To increase pupils' achievement in these subjects, the school very effectively sets pupils into two ability groups in Years 4, 5 and 6, and in Year 3 for numeracy. Groups are flexible, as teachers review each term whether a pupil would benefit from more support or challenge in the other group.
18. All pupils benefit from an equally broad range of learning activities. Pupils whose first language is not English are very well supported in school. A support teacher works with pupils, either in the classroom or withdraws pupils to extend their English vocabulary effectively. The focus of these sessions is planned very well with class teachers so that vocabulary is linked to current lessons. When pupils arrive at the school, part-time bilingual classroom assistants help pupils to quickly settle into school and support them very well in lessons. Trained learning support assistants give good support to pupils with special educational needs in class, so that they can fully participate in lessons. Work is modified if necessary in accordance with relevant individual education plans. A knowledgeable special educational needs co-ordinator very effectively provides additional support to small groups of pupils so that they make very good progress in identified skills. The Traveller Education Service provides good support for the teaching and learning of traveller pupils, who achieve very well overall. The school has identified pupils who have particular gifts and talents and is currently developing good ways to extend the challenge for these pupils, for example, in clubs and in classes with other schools.
19. Teachers and pupils benefit greatly from the enthusiasm and expertise of specialist teachers and teaching assistants in science, ICT and art and design. These staff plan and teach lessons alongside teachers, often creating very good links between different subjects so that pupils are very motivated to learn. The maintained standards in art and design and improved standards in science and ICT are recognised to be mostly attributable to the success of this specialist input.
20. The school enhances the curriculum very well through an exciting array of visits, related very well to most subjects. Pupils visit a very wide variety of museums for history, geography and science and see a very good range of theatre productions, including ballet, musical productions and Shakespeare's plays. The Year 6 residential visit to the Isle of Wight helps pupils to live and work together as well as to gain geographical knowledge. Visitors to the school provide very good simulations of life in Roman, Tudor and Greek times as well

as music workshops, demonstration of Indian dance and expertise from artists, authors and poets. The school promotes pupils' enjoyment of learning very well through themed days and weeks. For example, One World Week stimulated deeper understanding of other cultures. Recently the school extended its very good curriculum provision to include French lessons for one class in each of Years 3, 4 and 5. The partner class will follow a similar programme later in the year. The school is successfully working towards the Healthy Schools Award and provides a good personal, social and health education.

21. The school provides a very good range of club activities in lunch breaks and after school. All are well attended. The school has been particularly successful in sporting competitions within the local area and with other schools. The school takes an active part in the community and pupils have sung in the cathedral and at a local care home.
  
22. The school's good accommodation is well maintained and decorated and the outside area provides good space for physical and quiet activities. Since the last inspection, the school has had a building extension in order to accommodate the increased number of classes and to provide increased space for group and individual teaching. A good reference library is situated in this part of the building but is not used sufficiently for independent research. The school plans to relocate the ICT suite as the area is cramped and has no natural light. Resources have improved for all subject areas. They are now good and used well to enhance learning.

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

The school has **very good** systems to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety and pupils receive **good** support, advice and guidance during their time at school. The school is **effective** in taking pupils' views into consideration.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides a very caring and supportive environment where pupils grow into confident and happy individuals.
- Pupils are confident that there is somebody they can turn to if they have a problem or need help.
- Pupils feel it is a very safe and friendly school and value the fact that their views are taken into consideration.
- Guidance for pupils does not always indicate clearly what they need to improve.
- Pupils welcome the fact that the school consults with them and listens to their views.

### **Commentary**

23. The very good pastoral systems continue to foster a very caring ethos, with teachers and support staff providing a safe environment for pupils. The overall provision for pupils' health, welfare and protection is very good, and is a significant factor in enabling pupils to achieve very well and enjoy their schooling. Parents have very positive views about the school and are very pleased at the supportive family atmosphere where their children are well

looked after and treated equally. Arrangements for child protection issues and procedures relating to health and safety are well thought out and strictly implemented. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and the governors carry out their responsibility for health and safety issues conscientiously.

24. Procedures to monitor and support pupils' personal and academic development are being developed successfully. Teachers know their pupils well and whole class target setting and group improvement targets in literacy and numeracy are being implemented. However, much of this is new and pupils are not fully aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve. The school has good systems in place to offer support and guidance for those pupils with special education needs and those who speak English as an additional language. This has a significant impact on their ability to access the curriculum and results in their very good levels of achievement. The school seeks to meet the emotional needs of pupils through counselling and has good liaison with the various outside agencies to support the needs of vulnerable pupils. There are very good links between the infant and junior schools and this helps ensure the induction process into Year 3 works very well.
25. Pupils are generally contented and feel it is a very happy and friendly school. They speak confidently of the good rapport developed with their teachers who know them well. They are confident that, having formed trusting relationships with adults, they can turn to any member of staff if they have a problem or are unhappy, and that issues will be dealt with swiftly. Year 6 pupils have established a worry / thank-you box which enables them to raise sensitive issues in a confidential manner. Pupils have input into class rules and share their ideas and views during circle time. Opportunities to specifically consult with pupils and to take their views into consideration are being developed well through the school council. Pupils voted in as class representatives are enthusiastic about what they have managed to achieve. They feel their views are listened to and mostly acted on. They would like this role to be developed further so they have more responsibility and independence in discussions.

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

The partnership with parents, the local community, the church and other schools is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are very supportive and hold the school in high regard.
- The very strong links forged with the local community and church provide valuable learning and enrichment opportunities for pupils.
- The very good links with other schools and partner institutions enhance learning opportunities and pupils' enjoyment of school.

### **Commentary**

26. Parents expressed great satisfaction about the work of the school both during the pre-inspection meeting and on their questionnaires. They always feel welcome and like the caring attitude of staff. Parents feel comfortable approaching the school if they have questions or concerns and the 'open door'

policy gives them easy access to the headteacher and their children's teachers. A small number of parents feel that the school does not seek their views. Inspectors found that the school actively encourages parents' views, although it plans to develop a more systematic approach to ascertaining parents' views about the school by continuing to survey them on an annual basis and involve them in consultative forums. The regular newsletters provide details of forthcoming activities and events. Curriculum information is shared with parents each term so they can see what is going on.

27. Parents are encouraged to get involved in their child's learning and their support contributes very effectively to pupils' very good levels of achievement. Parents feel they are kept fully informed about their children through progress reports, regular consultation and review meetings. Those who speak English as an additional language are kept fully informed about their children's English language skills. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are invited to school to join in the reviews of individual education plans, to assess whether or not targets have been reached, and if so, what targets need next to be set. The annual reports to parents are very good. They clearly identify what has been covered, what pupils can do and understand. They also indicate levels of achievement and highlight areas for improvement.
28. Links with the local businesses and the local community are very good. Pupils sing for the elderly at a local day care centre; and join with the Salvation Army to sing carols at Christmas. They have also been invited to 'book signings' and the opening of local shops. Money and resources have been provided from a number of businesses, which have helped create the pupils' garden project and provide additional sports equipment. Links with Ss Alban and Stephen Church are especially strong, fostered through visits to the classroom by the school chaplain to extend pupils' learning or to conduct masses to celebrate special events. A large number of parents and local volunteers help out in the school on a regular basis and contribute very effectively to pupils' learning experience. For example, they run some of the after-school clubs; listen to reading; attend 'themed days' to help groups with activities such as Tudor cookery and undertake special projects. The parents' association is run jointly with the infant school and a large enthusiastic group of parents organise regular social and fund raising activities each year. These are very successful in raising substantial funds for both schools and provide additional resources as well as the money to lease computers or help fund the recent building project.
29. The school has forged a strong partnership with its linked infant school through a joint governing body, parents association, shared staff development activities and frequent visits. The transition arrangements are sensitively organised to ensure that the move into Year 3 is as smooth as possible. Pupils have very good contact with other local schools. They are very visible in the community through their successes in various competitive sporting activities and participation in music festivals. Links with secondary schools are carefully fostered to enhance curriculum activities and provide work placement opportunities for students. Good tracking systems are maintained once pupils move to their secondary schools and many ex-pupils return for visits. Collaborative links with Hertfordshire University are effectively developed to help train new teachers.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good** overall. The headteacher provides **very good** leadership. The governance of the school is **very good**. The effectiveness of the overall management and the leadership of other key staff are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has a very clear educational vision for the school and is very influential in promoting a strong, caring and supportive Catholic ethos.
- Governors and staff work well together as a team to ensure that every pupil is included fully in all aspects of the school's programme.
- Governors work in a very good, influential partnership with the headteacher and her staff to evaluate the quality of education provided by the school and to shape the direction of its work.
- Key subject leaders manage their subjects well, although staff changes have limited the contribution of other subject co-ordinators.
- The procedures to track pupils' progress during the year are not always rigorous enough.
- The finances are well managed and the school runs efficiently and effectively.



## Commentary

30. The overall quality of leadership and management has improved since the last inspection. The headteacher, working closely with a supportive and influential deputy, provides strong leadership. She has made a major contribution to the school's success, particularly in establishing a vibrant and caring Catholic community that includes fully pupils from a wide range of ethnic and social backgrounds. The headteacher has been particularly effective in creating a very strong team approach, given the high level of staff change over the last two years. The support given by staff to the headteacher and to each other is another key factor in the school's success. The opportunity for staff new to the school to work closely with more experienced colleagues has enabled them to benefit from their expertise, develop their own professional skills and contribute increasingly effectively to the school's improvement. There is a very good climate of self-improvement, as reflected in the school's active participation in the Primary Leadership Programme (PLP). Teachers, support staff and managers are keen to build further on the school's effectiveness and are in a good position to improve the provision and continue to raise standards.
31. The good management of the school is reflected well in the good procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher, working closely with her deputy, key subject co-ordinators and the school's development adviser, carries out regular lesson observations, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Key points for development are identified and exemplar lessons are given to promote teachers' skills. Follow-up observations, together with opportunities for staff to attend relevant training courses, help to improve their teaching skills and contribute to their continuing professional development. The school has focused strongly, through its involvement in the PLP, on the roles of subject leaders, particularly as many are new to their roles. This programme is already proving successful in creating effective subject leadership in literacy and numeracy. The contribution of other subject leaders is less well developed, although the school has identified this as an improvement priority. The management of special educational needs is good. The special needs co-ordinator is new to her post but she has taken swift action to support her colleagues in managing pupils with special educational needs.
32. The governing body is very effective in supporting the school, evaluating the quality of education it provides and working closely with the headteacher and her staff to target improvement. Governors have a very good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development through visits by the monthly duty governors, analysis of the school's results in national tests, meetings with subject leaders and parental questionnaires. They are involved effectively in agreeing priorities for the school improvement plan and have established their own self-evaluation and development plan to improve the role and contribution of the governing body. They maintain good links with the parents through a termly governors' newsletter and through regularly updating their section on the school's website. The committee structure within the governing body is very effective and enables the governors to use their collective expertise well for the benefit of the school. Governors, together with the headteacher, look carefully at the school's results in tests to see how

different groups of Year 6 pupils have achieved, to identify where they can improve and to target additional support. The consistent use of assessment information to set end-of-year targets for each year group and regularly review pupils' progress towards them is not established fully. The governing body very successfully ensures that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

33. The financial planning and management of the budget are very good. The budget is carefully targeted on improvement priorities and the school and governors ensure that the principles of best value are applied well when purchasing goods. Good procedures are in place to assess how spending decisions affect standards and the quality of education. Funds are usually used fully, although staff changes over the last two years have resulted in a small surplus being built up that is used to maintain staffing levels. The day-to-day administration is smooth and efficient. The school provides a very good quality of education, promotes very good achievement and gives very good value for money.

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

<b>Income and expenditure (£)</b>		<b>Balances (£)</b>	
Total income	600 120	Balance from previous year	11 315
Total expenditure	597 254	Balance carried forward to the next	14 181
Expenditure per pupil	2 740		

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS**

### **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2**

#### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **very good**.

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

- The very effective subject co-ordinator maintains a strong focus on improvement.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and teachers have high expectations.
- Teachers and support staff work effectively together in supporting pupils who need extra help and guidance.
- Teachers plan in great detail to set challenging work for all pupils.
- Target setting is not yet fully embedded and teachers' marking is variable.

#### **Commentary**

34. Standards in Year 6 in speaking and listening, reading and writing are well above the national average. They clearly reflect the well above average results achieved by Year 6 pupils in national tests over the last few years. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. They are very securely on course to reach the school's above average targets by the end of the year and maintain the high standards. For example, about half of the present Year 6 pupils are already exceeding the average level. This maintains the high standards achieved in the 2004 national tests when 68 per cent of pupils attained above average levels and the school was in the top 5 per cent nationally. An analysis of the work of Year 3 pupils shows improvement in writing and reading since the beginning of the year when standards were below average, especially for higher-attaining pupils. Pupils in Year 4 make good progress and they achieve well. Pupils' progress and achievement accelerate sharply in Year 5 and even more so in Year 6 when pupils' progress and achievement are very good and at times excellent.
35. The overall quality of teaching is very good. In Year 6, teaching is, at times, excellent. This excellent teaching strongly includes all the very good features exemplified in planning, assessment, expertise, teaching skills, management of time, resources and pupils, as well as a secure knowledge and understanding of the National Literacy Strategy. The excellent teaching goes further. It features the subject co-ordinator's profound knowledge of English language and literature that enables her to drive forward pupils' understanding and appreciation with confidence and conviction and without hesitation. Her own passionate interest in her subject is clearly evident and she inspires her pupils to do their very best. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding of language and literature are particularly enriched to a standard not commonly found in primary schools.

36. All teachers plan very well to set work that matches the needs of their pupils, reflecting their high expectations. They make lesson objectives clear, generate a strong sense of direction, and bring the lesson to a satisfying close with good evaluations. These are improvements since the last inspection. A particular strength in teaching is the close liaison between teachers, teaching assistants and the special educational needs co-ordinator, providing good support in class for all pupils who require extra help.
37. Nearly all pupils reach very good standards in speaking and listening and in reading. The school makes good use of a specialist drama teacher to extend pupils' speaking and listening skills. Guided reading times ensure that all pupils have regular opportunities with their teacher and support staff in sharing and enjoying books. Pupils extend their writing skills successfully in a good range of writing activities. This is built on very effectively in Year 6 when pupils make very good progress in all kinds of writing. They use very interesting vocabulary to enliven their narrative writing, and are adept at converting play scripts into prose and vice versa. They have grasped the features of good creative writing, for example creating suspense in stories, using settings, characters, dilemmas and resolutions to very good effect. The quality of the curriculum for English in Years 5 and 6 is particularly rich and exciting. For instance, pupils in Year 6 are given many very good opportunities to study the styles of authors such as Shakespeare, Ian Serraillier and Frances Hodgson Burnett, and visits to the theatre bring scripts like 'The Tempest' vividly to life. Pupils' handwriting, and the presentation of pupils' work are very good in Years 5 and 6. However, younger pupils were observed during the inspection holding their pencils incorrectly so that their writing was not correctly formed.
38. There is a good range of assessment procedures that teachers use well to record pupils' performance, map their progress, and plot their likely attainment in the future. Pupils with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and travellers' children receive extra help from the special educational needs co-ordinator in small groups. The quality of this teaching is very good. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well because the teacher makes swift ongoing assessments and adjusts her teaching accordingly. The school has recently adopted new arrangements for setting pupils' improvement targets in literacy. These are not understood clearly by pupils and have not yet become fully established. Teachers' marking is thorough, values and encourages good quality but does not always indicate to pupils clearly enough how they can improve their work further.
39. Very good subject leadership and management have driven forward very good improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator monitors her subject closely and keeps a watchful eye on pupils' attainment, progress and likely achievement in future. She checks planning to ensure there are no gaps or unnecessary overlaps and has a very clear idea of how she wants the subject to develop. As a teacher, she is an excellent role model for her colleagues. A very good feature of the management of the subject is the setting of pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6, enabling teachers to focus their planning particularly closely to meet pupils' needs. This is rightly regarded by the school as a significant factor in the very high standards in Year 6.

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

40. Pupils make very good use of their literacy skills in many other areas of the curriculum. For example, they construct labels and captions for their work in science, and design and technology. In history and religious education, pupils write extended accounts of events and describe characters using exciting vocabulary and correct punctuation. Pupils successfully combine their literacy skills with ICT when writing poetry, prayers, descriptions and stories.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good teaching in Year 6 extends pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding very effectively.
- The setting of pupils into two ability groups in each year promotes good achievement in Years 3, 4 and 5 and very good achievement in Year 6.
- Pupils are very positive in their attitudes to the subject and enjoy their work.
- Pupils are not sufficiently aware of how they could improve their work.
- There are good links with other subjects.

### **Commentary**

41. Standards are well above the national average by the end of Year 6. These standards match the results of national tests for 11 year olds in 2003 and 2004. There has been very good improvement in standards since the last inspection because the quality of teaching across the school has improved and the National Numeracy Strategy is taught very effectively. The school increased the proportion of pupils who attain the expected National Curriculum level at the end of Year 6 and significantly increased the proportion of pupils who attain the higher Level 5. In the 2004 national tests, over a third of pupils attained the higher level. An analysis of pupils' work demonstrates that pupils achieve very well. In Years 3, 4 and 5 pupils achieve well, which reflects the good overall teaching and learning in these classes. Pupils' achievement and learning accelerate in Year 6 and are very good, mainly because of the high expectation and challenge created for all levels of ability by very effective teaching. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in classes and particularly well in small groups, so that they are able to fully participate in lessons and achieve very well. Bilingual teaching assistants, a support teacher and class teachers provide very good guidance and support for pupils whose home language is not English, so that they achieve very well. From an analysis of the results of tests, pupils from the traveller community achieve as well as their peers.
42. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is consistently very good in Year 6 and is a significant factor in helping pupils to achieve very well. Teachers in this year group use a good range of challenging activities and questions to extend pupils' learning. They work successfully with support staff to enable all pupils to be included fully and to achieve very well. Pupils respond enthusiastically to meet the teachers' high expectations of the amount and quality of work that each pupil should achieve in a lesson. They rise very well to the challenge of using a number of different strategies to solve different types of numerical problems and demonstrate a desire to achieve well. Presentation of pupils' work is much improved since the last inspection. Pupils are set effectively in each year group into two ability groups, so that pupils' learning is more efficiently focused to their needs and therefore achievement is good and often very good. Areas of learning in the two bands are similar and groups are

reviewed regularly. In the lessons observed, teachers planned very well for different abilities within the set, but an analysis of pupils' work shows that this is not always the case. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, often with comments. However, pupils do not have the opportunity to respond to these comments and rarely correct work. The school has recently developed three broad group targets for numeracy for each age group of pupils. These are not yet used effectively in lessons or marking and many pupils do not know what they are. Homework is set regularly and consolidates work done in lessons well.

43. The subject leadership and management are good. The new co-ordinator monitored pupils' work and teachers' plans well. She has observed teaching in all classes and given constructive feedback about how to improve pupils' learning. A good analysis of Year 6 national tests highlighted areas for improvement, although analysis of the optional tests done by pupils in other year groups have not yet been analysed sufficiently. Pupils' assessments are tracked effectively from year to year but at present the co-ordinator does not monitor these stringently each term.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

44. Pupils are applying their mathematical skills very well in other subjects. This contributes successfully to the good and very good achievement of pupils. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 6 constructed and interpreted graphs very well in science, Year 4 used symmetry and pattern well in their artwork and Year 5 created formulae in spreadsheets for areas and perimeters of shapes very well. Measurement is used frequently in design and technology when making artefacts and pupils measure liquids carefully in scientific experiments.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Support from an enthusiastic science specialist has a significant impact on raising standards in Years 5 and 6 to well above average levels.
- A very well planned curriculum ensures that pupils have a broad base of knowledge and skills and plenty of opportunities for investigation.
- There are few opportunities for older pupils to raise their own questions for investigation.
- Marking does not always inform pupils of what they need to do to improve their work.

### **Commentary**

45. Standards are well above the national average and reflect the results of national tests for the past two years. There is very good improvement since the last inspection because there are very good guidelines for the teaching of the

subject and planning for units of work. The quality of teaching has improved and this has raised pupils' achievement. Overall, pupils' achievement is very good. It is good in Years 3, 4 and 5 because teaching is good. In Year 6, the dynamic teamwork between teachers and the science specialist promotes great enthusiasm and interest in pupils, who achieve very well. In spite of the high number of pupils joining the school each year, the proportion of pupils who attain above the expected level in national tests has risen considerably. In 2004 tests over two-thirds of pupils attained the higher Level 5. The role, expertise and motivation of the science specialist in the planning, organisation and teaching of lessons are instrumental in helping pupils to attain these very good standards. Good support from teachers and teaching assistants help pupils with special educational needs or those whose home language is not English to achieve as well as their peers.

46. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Year 6. The school has identified the need to extend pupils' experimental and investigative skills and so practical work is a key feature of most science lessons. The good opportunities that pupils have to work together play a significant part in their social development. Through pertinent questioning, teachers in all classes emphasise fair testing and the use of relevant scientific vocabulary very well and pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of these in their responses. Very good safety precautions are taken in practical activities and pupils carry out tasks sensibly, recording results carefully. Although some investigations are recorded in ways that pupils have chosen, there is an over-reliance on prepared sheets for recording. This sometimes restricts opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to explain the results of their investigation as fully as they could. Achievement accelerates in Years 5 and 6 where pupils are encouraged to make hypotheses before starting an investigation and give reasons for results based on the evidence accumulated. In the development of experimental and investigative work, teachers are beginning to encourage older pupils to raise their own questions, design investigations and think of ways of improving these. However, this is not yet developed sufficiently. Teachers plan exciting visits to stimulate pupils' learning; for example, Year 4 visited the Science Museum as part of their studies of friction and electricity. There are good links with other subjects; for example, Year 4 use science facts in poetry and Year 5 design a classification key in ICT.
47. The co-ordinator is new to the subject this year, but leads and manages the subject well with the assistance of the science specialist. She has monitored teaching and learning well by looking at teachers' plans and pupils' work and observation of lessons is planned for next term. Analysis of national tests is good, although tracking of pupils' achievement throughout the school is at an early stage of development. Marking of pupils' work and target setting have been identified as areas for development, so that pupils are more aware of how they can improve their work and their practical investigative skills in lessons.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' key ICT skills are being developed very well by very good specialist teaching.
- Teachers use very good opportunities to use computers to support pupils' learning in many subjects.
- The leadership and management of the subject co-ordinator have been influential in improving attainment and encouraging staff to make greater use of ICT resources.
- The skills and knowledge of higher-attaining pupils are extended very well through the computer club.

## **Commentary**

48. The school has made huge progress since the last inspection, when standards of attainment were below average. Pupils in Year 6 attain standards that are well above nationally expected levels. Achievement is very good throughout the school, mainly as a result of the very good specialist teaching and teachers' increased use of the computer suite and other ICT resources.
49. By the end of Year 6, pupils are confident and very competent computer users. They cut and paste very well to create their own good quality web pages as part of their history topic on Ancient Egypt. They use their improved skills to develop buttons that link these pages together very effectively. Almost all Year 6 pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of spreadsheets and different databases. Many show a good understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of using different ways of gathering information, for example, when comparing the Internet, CD's and non-fiction books. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs receive very good support from teachers, learning support staff and other pupils to help them to be involved fully and achieve very well. Achievement is very good overall as teachers plan carefully to build pupils' skills and knowledge successfully on prior learning, for example, when developing their word processing and publishing skills. This results in high quality work being achieved; for example, Year 4 pupils use their skills very well to publish a detailed newsletter and Year 6 pupils extend their skills to produce an imaginative school leaflet.
50. Teaching and learning are very good. Each class is timetabled for a weekly ICT skills lesson with the specialist subject co-ordinator. Her very good subject knowledge is used very effectively to promote pupils' skills and knowledge in all aspects of the subject. She provides very good quality tasks to extend these skills, for example, creating web pages and personal collages. She uses extension activities well to challenge the higher-attaining pupils, for example, when Year 5 pupils use search engines to locate information, although occasional over-direction limits the opportunity for pupils to try out their own questions first. Other teachers make very good use of the ICT suite to build successfully on these basic skills sessions and provide a very good range of

interesting learning activities. These stimulate pupils' interest and pupils are very enthusiastic in their approach to learning.

51. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator has only taken on the responsibility in a part-time capacity since the start of this school year. However, she has been influential in raising the profile of the subject, significantly improving pupils' achievement and giving a clear lead in developing the subject. The co-ordinator has provided training to improve staff confidence and subject knowledge and given guidance on using their skills well in their classroom practice. She has evaluated teachers' plans and their assessment of pupils' skills and has collected portfolios of pupils' work to check on their achievement in each year group. The co-ordinator has established a good subject action plan that targets improvement priorities, for example, the school's introduction of interactive whiteboards. She works closely with a very good ICT governor to plan realistic subject developments, linked to funding. Her initiatives on keeping parents informed of developments through an ICT newsletter and using higher-attaining pupils in the school computer club to upgrade the school website, have contributed successfully to maintaining a strong focus on the subject.

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

52. The school makes very good use of ICT to support pupils' learning in different curriculum subjects. Teachers are using computers, digital cameras, sensors and other resources very successfully in many subjects and this is reflected clearly in work on display and in pupils' folders. For example, pupils use computer programs to create paintings in the style of famous artists such as Seurat; research information for topics in science, history and geography; use spreadsheets and programs on shape in mathematics and use the digital camera to record their work in physical education. This has increased significantly since the last inspection and enhances the quality of pupils' learning.

### **HUMANITIES**

53. Only two **geography** lessons and one **history** lesson were seen during the inspection. Pupils' work and teaching plans were studied and there was discussion with the teacher who co-ordinates both subjects, and with other staff and pupils. There was insufficient evidence to give a judgement on the provision and the overall quality of teaching and learning in either subject, although teaching was good in the lessons observed. Pupils attain above expected standards in history and geography by the end of Year 6. Achievement is good in both subjects, resulting from good teaching and a good programme of interesting learning activities. Standards in history remain at the good level reported in the last inspection. They have improved in geography, especially in pupils' knowledge and understanding of different geographical features and their effects on the local environment.

54. Year 6 pupils have a good knowledge of how the coastline changes in different parts of the United Kingdom. They describe in good detail how different types of beach are formed, for example, sandy and rocky, and use specific geographical terms accurately when talking about coastal erosion. Many have very good general knowledge and locate many of the oceans and continents on a world map. They have an enthusiasm and interest in environmental issues and put forward persuasive ideas on such issues as tourism and pollution. They have a good understanding of how geographical and environmental changes affect different groups of people in different ways and are greatly looking forward to seeing some of these in detail when they visit the Isle of Wight. Pupils use ICT well to research information from the Internet and from CD's and videos, for example, when Year 4 pupils compare their lives with those of children in a Gambian village. Pupils' mapping skills are developed well throughout the school with regular use of different size maps and frequent use of atlases to locate countries and key geographical features.
55. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a good knowledge of different periods in history such as the Vikings, the Tudors, World War 2 and the Ancient Egyptians. They speak knowledgeably about different sources of information and recall, with much enthusiasm, how their knowledge was improved by a range of visits and visitors. These included a Tudor Day involving costumes and artefacts, a World War 2 afternoon in which grandparents came into school to talk about their war-time experiences and visits to a Victorian schoolroom in St Albans and Duxford War Museum. Many could remember specific historical details about these themed days and visits and clearly valued the experiences. Many Year 6 pupils were confident in explaining how different events could be interpreted differently by different groups of people.
56. Teaching and learning were good in the small number of lessons observed and stimulated an enthusiasm for learning. Teachers used resources very well to capture pupils' interest. For example, Year 3 pupils were fascinated by the range of clothing and equipment that the teacher had put into five holiday travel bags. This led to great enjoyment and provoked good discussion on using their knowledge on climates to decide which bag was meant for which one of five specific holiday destinations. Teachers challenged pupils well to use their knowledge to consider difficult problems, such as the environmental impact of a new hotel on the Isle of Wight. An analysis of pupils' work shows that some teachers use worksheets too frequently. This does not enable pupils to use their very good writing skills enough and often restricts the depth of some pupils' answers.
57. Leadership and management of history and geography are satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator has only recently taken on the responsibility, although is already improving her understanding of the subjects. She has evaluated samples of pupils' work and teachers' assessments. She has provided a humanities file for each teacher which includes relevant topic websites and links to other subjects to enhance pupils' learning. She has developed a subject action plan, although has not monitored teaching and its impact on learning.

The co-ordinator is keen to audit resources and to further develop the subjects, although these are yet to influence teaching and learning.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

58. No judgement of provision in **art and design** has been made because only very small sections of two lessons were seen. Teachers' plans show that the subject has a good programme of teaching and learning, which follows national guidance and has very good links with other subjects. The subject is enhanced very well by input into all year groups' lessons and planning by a specialist teaching assistant, who also assists with an after-school art club. Examples of work around the school indicate that by the end of Year 6 attainment is above that expected nationally and that achievement across the school is good. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. However, although there has been an improvement in the use of sketchbooks, there is variation in the quality of entries in Years 3 and 4. In two of the parallel classes in those years, there is low expectation of completion of tasks and presentation. Nevertheless, good standards of work are on display for these year groups. There is generally a higher expectation of the quality of pupils' work in sketchbooks in Years 5 and 6, especially when trying a range of techniques and developing skills.
59. The very good displays of work indicate that pupils have good opportunities to make observational drawing and to investigate colour, techniques and texture within their work, making images and artefacts in two- and three-dimensional forms. They are stimulated well by the work of well-known artists such as Lowry, Picasso, and Van Gogh and use artists' techniques effectively to create their own work. Master classes with artists and pupils from the local secondary school extend the skills of higher attaining pupils well. For example, there are extremely good examples of silk paintings of flowers and shells, with extension of the activity for an able pupil. A particular strength within art and design is the imaginative way that teachers plan artwork to link with other subjects. For example, Year 3 paintings of 'couples' extended their work on 'relationships' in personal and social education and Year 6 pupils drew pastel pictures relating to Shakespeare's Macbeth. Cultural understanding is incorporated well. For example, Year 3 worked on Gambian masks, and Indian art was developed for all during an 'Indian Day'. The quality of the leadership and management of the subject is good. The subject leader has clear plans and ideas for improving the subject, for example, by further developing the current satisfactory assessment procedures.
60. No lessons of **design and technology** could be seen during the inspection, so no overall judgement on provision or the quality of teaching can be made. Evidence from pupils' plans, evaluations of previous work and artefacts in progress was studied and the subject discussed with the co-ordinator, staff and pupils. These indicate that standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly the same as those expected nationally and achievement is satisfactory overall. The subject is taught in blocks of time rather than every week. Teachers' plans show that the subject has a satisfactory scheme of work, which follows national

guidelines. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory at present. However, a new, knowledgeable and enthusiastic member of staff is the subject co-ordinator. He has already prepared detailed folders to assist staff in teaching and assessing pupils' work. The school identified this subject as one that needs improvement. The subject expertise of the co-ordinator is beginning to be used well in the planning, organisation and teaching of all-day workshops in liaison with class teachers to share his good practice. For example, Year 4 pupils evaluated bought money holders well and then generated generally good, labelled designs and sketches for their own artefact. Some products are not yet complete, but the quality of money holders is at least in line with that expected for the age group and in many cases better, as pupils learn to stitch carefully and use a variety of fastenings and decorations.

61. A variety of materials has been used satisfactorily in pupils' previous work. For example, food to make sandwiches, wood, card and paper for modelling a fairground, pop-up books and presentation boxes. Nevertheless, over the past year, the presentation of pupils' plans has often been untidy, with little variation in the planning techniques of Year 3 and 4 classes and those in Years 5 and 6. Many evaluations of products seen in the sample of pupils' work are too simplistic, although Year 5 pupils used a good framework and evaluated their fairground model well. There are satisfactory links with other subjects. For example, mathematical measurement is used when making artefacts and pupils apply their understanding of 'forces' in model making.
62. Only one **music** lesson was observed during the inspection so it is not possible to make judgements about overall provision, the quality of teaching, or pupils' achievement.
63. From discussions with pupils and the subject leader, listening to pupils sing in Mass and to individual pupils play instruments in assembly, standards reached by pupils in Year 6 are in line with those expected nationally. An analysis of curriculum documents shows that pupils' skills are taught in all required aspects, although not always built effectively on prior learning. Pupils sing clearly and tunefully and show good respect for and appreciation of the contribution of music to the act of worship. During the last school year, pupils' composition skills were improved well when a specialist music teacher worked with the class teachers to produce a CD for each class. The school provides good opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to extend their skills through individual tuition; this was shown clearly when a pupil, who had just attained a distinction certificate for his playing of the clarinet, played with confidence and accuracy to the whole school.
64. Music features in extra-curricular events and festivals, significantly enhancing the curriculum, for example in religious education and history. Music also contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, through visiting musicians and carol singing in the local community.
65. All pupils have full access to music and all related activities. The subject leader is new to her role. She has drawn up a realistic action plan that maps out the further development of the subject to ensure that pupils' musical skills and

knowledge are built more effectively on prior learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall.

## Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most Year 6 pupils have good sporting skills.
- The range of physical activities is very good and enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular clubs and sporting competitions.
- Pupils have enthusiastic attitudes and enjoy participating and improving their skills.
- Very good subject leadership has enabled pupils to benefit from working closely with parent volunteers, community organisations and other local schools.
- Teachers do not always help pupils to improve the standard of their performance.

### Commentary

66. Pupils attain above expected standards by the end of Year 6, especially in games and swimming. Achievement is good, resulting from good teaching and pupils' enthusiastic involvement in a very good range of activities. Some higher-attaining pupils attain well above expected levels as a result of very effective specialist coaching, particularly in swimming and football. Standards have been maintained at the good level reported in the last inspection.
67. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are very good when the strong subject expertise of the teacher or coach helps pupils to extend their skills, for example, when higher-attaining pupils achieve very good standards when preparing for swimming galas and other team sports. Teaching is good in lessons, and often very good. Teachers use resources well to capture pupils' interest and stimulate the range of their movements. For example, most Year 3 pupils showed a good range of expressive movements to reflect the music, when they performed a short dance sequence. Teachers use pupil demonstrations well to illustrate good quality work. They point out how pupils can improve their performance. This results in higher standards, for example, when Year 5 pupils improved the links between the different symmetrical and asymmetrical movements in their gymnastic sequences. Teachers do not encourage pupils to evaluate their own performance enough, and that of others, and point out ways in which pupils' skills could improve. They do not always focus strongly enough on trying to raise the standard of work.
68. The very good leadership and management of the subject co-ordinator is a key factor in ensuring that the subject is given a high profile in the curriculum, for example, by enabling the school to achieve Activemark. She has established very good links with a local secondary school which has attained sports college status. This has enabled specialist teachers to visit the school to train staff, for example, in gymnastics, and to demonstrate effective teaching techniques. As a result, teachers' confidence and competence in teaching gymnastics have improved and this was reflected clearly in the lessons observed. The co-ordinator has involved parent volunteers effectively to contribute to the school's

broad programme of activities. For example, a large number of pupils attend the after-school football clubs for boys and girls. They are keen to improve their skills and to be chosen to represent the school in competitive matches against other local schools. The school's success in these and other sports such as athletics, swimming and netball is clearly evident in the school's large number of sporting trophies. The opportunities for pupils to use the very good facilities at the nearby secondary school and at the local leisure centre, together with the specialist teaching, extend their skills in a very good range of activities, especially in athletics and swimming. Many pupils gain achievement certificates which are presented in a weekly assembly or in the end of the year sports evening which the co-ordinator organises for the pupils and their parents.

69. Discussions with pupils show that they greatly enjoy the range of activities and value the very good after-school clubs and playing in the school's teams. Pupils were proud to talk about their achievements, for example, in swimming and football. Boys and girls are given good opportunities in all activities, with pupils from many different ethnic backgrounds contributing equally to the school's sporting success.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

70. Under the very good leadership of the headteacher, the school's strong Catholic ethos promotes a caring and supportive school community. The good programme for personal, social and health education and citizenship adds positively to pupils' personal development. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have weekly lessons to focus on issues relevant to their personal development and to the world around them. Teachers plan these lessons well, although they do not always ensure that pupils have enough time to discuss their differing views and ideas. The school makes good use of drama and other initiatives, for example, rainbows and worry boxes, to help pupils to raise any concerns. These have been particularly successful recently in focusing on bereavement, following the sudden death of a member of staff. The school promotes healthy eating and lifestyles through science and physical education and is working towards achieving the Healthy Schools Award. With parental support, it provides pupils with healthy food choices through its provision of fruit. The range of responsibilities taken on by pupils, especially in Year 6, increases their understanding of the needs of others and the importance of their contribution to a harmonious school community. Members of the school council value the opportunity to contribute their ideas and those of other pupils in their classes to improve the school and the lives of others, for example, through fund raising for charities. The good use of a weekly Awards Assembly helps to confirm pupils' sense of achievement and promotes their self-belief.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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