

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST SIMON AND ST JUDE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Bolton, Lancashire

LEA area: Bolton

Unique reference number: 105213

Headteacher: Mr J Fish

Lead inspector: Mrs J Moore

Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November 2004

Inspection number: 267717

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 controlled  
Age range of pupils: 4 – 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 342

School address: Newport Road  
Great Lever  
Bolton  
Lancashire  
Postcode: BL3 2DT

Telephone number: 01204 333583  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr S Jones

Date of previous inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> November 2002

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Simon and St Jude's Church of England Primary School is larger than average with 342 pupils on roll. It is situated in Great Lever, a suburb of Bolton. Housing in the area is a mixture of owner occupied and rented properties, interspersed with industrial units. Most pupils live locally but a significant number of pupils move into and out of the school during any one year. Children's skills and understanding are well below those expected for their age when they join the reception classes. Most pupils are white but the school has a very high percentage of pupils whose first language is not English. These pupils are from diverse ethnic backgrounds, having mixed heritage as well as Indian, Pakistani, Black British and Chinese heritages. The school also has a small number of pupils from the traveller community. There is a higher than average percentage of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals and the percentage of pupils with special educational needs is above average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is below average. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties with a minority of pupils having difficulties with speech and communication, emotional, social and behavioural problems and physical difficulties.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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18346	Rod Bristow	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Physical education
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20191	John Eadie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Citizenship Design and technology
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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>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>11</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 AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>34</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

St Simon and St Jude is a rapidly improving school that provides a **satisfactory** education for its pupils. The school has successfully overcome a number of difficulties. The recent appointment of a dynamic and experienced headteacher has been the catalyst for change. Teamwork is strong. The school has the capability to move forward rapidly and sustain its improvement now that effective systems and firm leadership are in place. Parents and pupils are proud of their school. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher who is supported very well by staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- The positive ethos creates a very good climate for learning.
- Standards and achievement are not high enough but significant improvements in teaching and learning are starting to push standards upwards.
- Children get a good start in the reception classes.
- There are limited systems for tracking how well pupils are doing and there are not enough personal targets to help them to improve.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Pupils who speak English as their second language have good support that enables them to achieve well as do pupils from the traveller community.
- Attendance and punctuality are not good enough.

The very good improvement since the previous inspection is due to committed teamwork and an absolute determination to do better. There were many issues to be tackled and the school was judged to have serious weaknesses. This is no longer the case and St Simon and St Jude's has moved forward significantly.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

In 2004, a greater number of pupils attained higher standards in all three subjects than they did in 2003, with the best improvement in English. These improvements are holding up in lessons as teaching and learning become stronger. In Years 1 to 6 pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average in the main subjects but they are rising above the 2004 levels, especially in mathematics where pupils work with others who are at a similar level. The school has high numbers of pupils with learning difficulties, as well as high numbers of pupils with a limited understanding of spoken English. Many pupils move into and out of the school during the course of the school year. These are all factors that affect standards but the achievement of these pupils is at least satisfactory and sometimes better than this. Focused teaching is successfully promoting positive learning for all these groups, but it is too early for new initiatives to be firmly embedded in the day-to-day life of the school.

Children in the reception class begin school with well below average skills and understanding. They get off to a good start, achieving well in all areas of learning. Even so, by the time they leave the reception class many of them will not have reached their targets, but they will not be far away.

Attendance levels are well below national averages, as they were at the last inspection, and too many parents still fail to get their children to school on time. Behaviour is good, as is pupils' personal development. Relationships are very good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

There is a much greater consistency to the teaching and learning across Years 1 to 6 than there was at the previous inspection. Teaching is **good** in the main subjects and in information and communication technology. The reception classes are well taught, as are pupils with learning difficulties, those with a limited understanding of spoken English and those from the traveller community. What is missing is an effective system for tracking how well pupils are achieving. Without this it is difficult to set meaningful targets for pupils to help them to improve. The curriculum is satisfactory and there are many successful clubs for the pupils to attend at lunchtime and after school, all of which enhance and broaden the curriculum very well. The school has good links with the community and other local schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **good**. The new headteacher provides outstanding and innovative leadership. He has a very clear vision of the way forward and his impact on the work and life of the school has been second to none. Senior managers and the deputy head fulfil their roles very well. Subject leaders provide good leadership and the subjects are managed well. Governance is good. The new headteacher has speedily tackled many of the issues in the school that were creating barriers to learning in the past. Effective systems are now in place to manage the work of the school. Teaching, learning, standards and achievement are monitored and evaluated very well. The school improvement plan is a very good vehicle for guiding the school's future development, pushing up standards and enhancing achievement.

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

Parents are well pleased with this happy school. The children enjoy coming to St Simon and St Jude's school and they recommend it to others.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Boost standards and achievement in the main subjects.
- Put in place effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and achievement.
- Set targets for all pupils so that they know what needs to be done to improve standards.
- Improve attendance and punctuality.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Standards are below average for both the seven and the eleven-year-olds but significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning mean that achievement is **satisfactory** across the school. These improvements have not been in place long enough for them to have a positive impact on pushing up standards overall but the indicators show that standards are starting to move upwards.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average. Achievement is satisfactory.
- Good teaching means that pupils achieve well in lessons.
- Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and their achievement is good.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as do those pupils who are dual language learners and those from the traveller community.
- The lack of individual targets limits pupils' knowledge about their performance as well as inhibiting the drive for improvement.

#### Commentary

1. In Years 1 to 6 pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and good in lessons. Progress is good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when progress was erratic. Last year, 2003/4, standards in the national tests for the seven-year-olds and the eleven-year-olds were well below average in English, mathematics and science. The only exception being English, where the oldest pupils attained below average standards.
2. The chart below shows that standards dipped at the end of Year 2. There were many reasons including a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs as well as many dual language learners and pupils who were new to the school. When compared to similar schools, standards were below average in reading and writing and well below average in mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	14.6 (16.0 )	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	12.9 (15.4 )	14.6 (14.6)
Mathematics	13.8 (15.8 )	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 48 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. Staffing changes also created instability for learners. That said, the staffing issues have been resolved, a new headteacher has been in post for almost two terms, and new initiatives to improve teaching and learning are successfully boosting pupils' achievement across the board. There are many positive indicators that standards are starting to improve across the school as the good achievement in lessons pushes standards upwards. Standards are below average in the main subjects in Year 2 and Year 6, but focused teaching and realistic assessment are the driving force behind improving standards.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.7 (23.3)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	24.9 (24.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	26.9 (25.7)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 50 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- Year 6 results show an improvement on the previous year. The barriers to learning that existed at Year 2 also affected Year 6. Attendance remains an issue at St Simon and St Jude and extended breaks of a few weeks hold back pupils' achievement. When compared to similar schools, standards in English were below average. They are well below average in mathematics and science. Trends in standards over time are variable. Last year they were below the national trend. The school is on course to develop a whole school approach for tracking the progress and achievement of pupils but as yet there are few individual targets. School targets were not met last year but the 2005 targets are based on accurate data and are realistic and achievable. The school aims to achieve at least average standards in relation to similar schools during the course of the year.
- When children join the reception classes their skills and understanding are well below those expected for children of similar ages. Almost half the current group are dual language learners, many of them with little knowledge of spoken English. Children make good progress and they achieve well but many of them will not reach their targets by the end of the reception year. The provision for these young children is good and is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- The current Year 2 pupils have limited speaking skills. They engage eagerly in whole class and small group discussions but their vocabulary is limited. Reading standards are close to average in Year 1 but in Year 2 pupils find it difficult to blend letters and sounds together and there are too many gaps in their understanding. Teachers are tackling this with positive results. Writing skills are developing soundly as pupils get to grips with writing extended pieces of work. By Year 6 pupils' speaking skills are broadly average. Reading standards are below average but the higher attaining pupils read fluently with expression. The others are not at this level. Writing skills are below average. Year 6 pupils are beginning to show an ability to write in different styles as they study the differences between biography and autobiography.
- In mathematics, pupils work in single age groups with pupils of similar abilities from Year 2 upwards. This is a recent development and well-focused teaching is pushing up standards. The emphasis on understanding number facts and improving mental calculation for higher, average and lower attaining pupils enables more pupils to attain higher levels. They enjoy mathematics.
- Standards in science, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education (RE) are below average. Pupils' achievement in science and RE is satisfactory. In ICT, achievement is good in lessons but unsatisfactory over time. Improved resources, staff training and more effective planning have improved the provision for these subjects, but the lack of a co-ordinated approach to assessing how well pupils are doing limits their progress.
- Pupils with special needs, and those from the traveller community, achieve effectively as a result of their needs being clearly identified and supported. However, their standards are lower than those normally found for most pupils. They take part in all areas of learning and, in the main, they achieve as well as all pupils because of the well-targeted support that they receive.

10. Dual language learners, of which there are many, receive good support that enables them to achieve well. The effective use of translators successfully facilitates learning and understanding, helping pupils to make good progress in developing their spoken English skills. This group is represented in each ability group throughout the school.

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

Pupils' attitudes are **good**, as is their behaviour. Their personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects is **good** overall. The levels of attendance and punctuality are **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of pupils' relationships with others is very good, enhancing the harmony of school life.
- The pupils engage in school life with enthusiasm and their attitudes make a significant contribution to the positive learning climate.
- Behaviour is good overall and the school manages inappropriate behaviour very well.
- Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The school cultivates pupils' personal development well, helping them to become more mature and grow into responsible citizens.
- The school monitors attendance carefully and is taking determined action to combat non-attendance and lateness. However, the level of attendance and punctuality is too low.

### **Commentary**

11. Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour, together with very good relationships, are having a positive impact on achievement and are helping to build a climate conducive to learning. This is an area of great improvement, particularly for relationships, which were only satisfactory at the time of the last inspection.
12. Attitudes are better than at the time of the previous inspection; they are now good. Pupils like school and are willing to work hard and keep trying. From the moment they start school, positive attitudes are nurtured well and pupils are encouraged to take full advantage of what St Simon and St Jude's offers. For example, during the lunch break pupils take part in a wide range of activities. One club seen during the inspection, the popular pottery club for the youngest, demonstrated their commitment as they worked hard improving their pots, in an atmosphere of pleasure and satisfaction. Pupils readily give details about the many things they enjoy at school. They talk warmly about their respect and liking for their teachers.
13. Behaviour was judged unsatisfactory at the last inspection as it was not managed consistently in all lessons and at breaktimes. It is now good. This is the result of the work co-ordinated by the Leading Behaviour Professional and learning can take place unhindered. Staff have consistently high expectations for behaviour, and pupils respond well to these expectations. Occasional challenging behaviour, inside or out, is checked appropriately and improvement supported, for example, by the lunchtime behaviour club, which makes a most significant contribution to behaviour management in the school and is popular with pupils needing help. There have been no exclusions. Pupils generally get on well with each other and bullying is rarely an issue. If it does occur, pupils believe that it will be dealt with promptly. Pupils clearly understand what constitutes good behaviour and know the system of rewards and sanctions. They value the yellow cards stating *I am pleased with you because you chose to . . .* which any member of staff can award.
14. The quality of relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults has greatly improved and is now very good overall. There is respect and mutual trust, with staff promoting tolerance, care and sensitivity towards others very well. Pupils of all ethnic groups and backgrounds value

friendships highly and work together harmoniously. They respond well to opportunities to take on responsibilities for a wide range of tasks. For example, the prefects give valued help to every class and the pupils appreciate the trust given by the teachers.

15. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good; the spiritual aspect is sound. This is also an improvement as all four aspects were judged satisfactory at the last inspection. The spirituality of the world is portrayed and reinforced in assemblies and such lessons as religious education and science. Local clergy make a valued contribution to this. Pupils value fair play and believe their teachers are good role models. They are willing to talk about dilemmas and possible actions. Their understanding of the richness of their own culture is good and they are learning about and developing respect for the beliefs of others through effective multicultural provision. They talked enthusiastically about a recent week which celebrated such differences as the dancing, food, stories, art and clothes of 22 countries. Their social skills are developing well and they are growing into more responsible citizens. They are proud of their school community, keen to contribute to it and would recommend it to others. Well-planned assemblies and circle time play an important part in pupils' self-development. In one very good circle time, appropriate periods for reflection aided the pupils' understanding of each other's feelings. The level of maturity of the pupils has risen since the last inspection and parents endorse this.
  
16. Attendance levels are still well below the national median. This remains unsatisfactory. In the last half term, as the measures put in place by the school begin to take effect, there has been a slight rise in attendance over the 92.2% shown in the table below. The school is working hard and imaginatively to improve things and the education social worker is now involved appropriately. However, there is a small number of parents and carers who do not ensure that their children regularly attend school. This includes those taking extended holidays in term time; the effect on their children's learning is carefully explained by the headteacher to these families.
  
17. Too many pupils are late for school in the morning. Consistent measures throughout the school identify latecomers and action is being taken to target the most persistent. As assembly follows registration, lessons are not usually disrupted, but these pupils are prevented from taking part in a whole school activity. Registration is efficient and meets requirements.

***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year i.e. 2003/4***

Authorised absence	
School data:	6.8%
National data:	5.1%

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	1.0%
National data:	0.4%

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education is **satisfactory**.

**Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning is **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Planning is good and most work is well marked, giving pupils clear pointers about improvement.
- Assessment systems lack consistency and there is not enough use of targets to move learning forward.

- Teachers use questions very effectively to check out understanding and to extend pupils' learning.
- Lessons have a clear structure and the main learning points are drawn together well at the end.
- From time-to-time learning slows for a minority of pupils because they find it difficult to concentrate.
- Pupils with special educational needs have good support, as do dual language learners and pupils from the travelling community, enabling all these groups to do well.

**Commentary**

18. There has been a very good improvement to the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Teaching is good. The inconsistencies in teaching and learning have been mostly ironed out, especially in the main subjects. Focused training, on developing a range of suitable teaching styles, has given staff the confidence to be innovative, making their lessons more interesting and holding pupils' attention well. These developments have not been in place long enough for them to have an impact on pushing up standards overall, but they are already having an impact on achievement, which is good in the majority of lessons. New systems have been especially successful in mathematics where pupils now work in groups with others who are at similar levels. Achievement is good and standards are beginning to rise.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 59 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	11 (19)	29 (49)	19 (32)	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.*

19. When children join the reception classes their skills and understanding are well below those of similar aged children in other parts of the country. A high proportion of children are dual language learners who are getting to grips with spoken English. Early assessment pinpoints where extra support is needed and the effective use of dual language staff enables the children to speedily adjust to life in the reception classes. No time is wasted in providing a range of appropriate activities for children of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs. The strong focus on developing spoken English pays dividends as all pupils increase their understanding, enabling them to have full access to the curriculum on offer. Teaching is good and children achieve well.
20. One significant strength in the teaching in Years 1 to 6 is the way in which staff use questions effectively. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, lower attaining pupils were asked 'How do we know this is an autobiography of Roald Dahl? Give me some words that tell me this is an autobiography'. The pace of the lesson was brisk and learning was successfully reinforced for the rest of the group.
21. Lessons are well structured in the main subjects of English, mathematics, science, ICT and RE. Pupils' skills are developing satisfactorily. Pupils know what they are expected to learn in a lesson and the main learning points are constantly reinforced, as in a Year 5 science lesson comparing pulse rate and heart beat, or in a Year 3 higher attaining mathematics lesson on fractions of different quantities. In both these lessons clear introductions enabled the pupils to get off to a brisk start without wasting time. Lessons moved forward at a good pace with teachers and teaching assistants constantly checking out learning and moving pupils' understanding forward. Effective conclusions to the lessons reinforced new learning for all pupils. Homework is used well to support learning in class. Most teachers use marking as an effective tool to promote learning, extend knowledge or to correct inaccuracies. However, the lack of individual targets curtails pupils' progress as well as limiting their own knowledge about how well they are performing.

22. The weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory lessons meant learning slowed for different groups. There was no consistency to this pattern but the main reasons were linked to the slow pace of some parts of lessons, the limited concentration span of a small number of pupils and gaps in previous learning hindering progress. Where these barriers to learning occurred, teachers had the confidence to analyse why learning had slowed, clearly outlining how they would tackle these in future lessons. All of which indicates a positive whole team approach to overcoming weaknesses.
23. The next area for development is assessment, which has already been identified by the school. There are inconsistencies in the current arrangements for tracking and recording pupils' progress and achievements in the various subjects. This limits the information that is available to teachers, subject leaders and the senior managers as they analyse trends in standards and achievement.
24. Teaching assistants have an essential role in promoting learning, especially for those pupils with special educational needs of which there are many. Good, well-targeted support enables this group to achieve well. The role of dual language teaching assistants has already been highlighted in this section in relation to the youngest children in the school. Their support is invaluable in the rest of the school, enabling pupils to gain in confidence and proficiency when speaking English. Standards and achievement are boosted.

## The curriculum

Overall, curriculum provision is **satisfactory**. This shows very good improvement since the last inspection when a major key issue was concerned with inadequacies in the curriculum. The curriculum is enriched well through the range of extra-curricular activities offered and particularly by the highly effective curriculum enrichment afternoons. The accommodation, although it has some shortcomings, is satisfactory for the number of pupils in the school and resources are satisfactory overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Everyone is fully included in all aspects of the day-to-day life of the school. No one is left out.
- Good provision is made for those pupils with special educational needs.
- The highly effective curriculum enrichment afternoons have enabled groups of staff to be freed to create a successful common format for planning.
- There is no overall plan for the delivery of personal, social and health education and citizenship.
- Although the accommodation is satisfactory overall, it has some important shortcomings which hold back pupils' learning.
- Resources are good for ICT and religious education, but inadequate for design and technology.

### Commentary

25. The school provides a sound range of worthwhile curricular opportunities and all statutory requirements are met. There are now schemes of work for all subjects, except personal, social and health education and citizenship. There are also policies for all subjects, although all these have not yet been ratified by the governing body. All this represents very good improvement since the last inspection, as there were very few policies or schemes of work at that stage. These improvements have been implemented through a considerable amount of hard work by the two key stage leaders and subject leaders. Evaluation of the curriculum has been built into the improvements made, largely being carried out when groups of teachers are freed during the highly effective curriculum enrichment afternoons. At present this monitoring is in its early

stages and there are few opportunities to share good practice across the school, other than in staff meetings. Teachers make good links between subjects; these links enhance learning and improve the relevance of the curriculum to pupils.

26. Although sex and relationships education and attention to drug misuse are taught, there is little teaching about the dangers of alcohol misuse. The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is unplanned, although there is a plan for the weekly circle time<sup>1</sup> carried out in each class.
27. There is a very good range of extra-curricular clubs, most of which run during the lunch breaks. These range through musical, artistic and more curriculum based clubs, such as *'Nutty Numeracy'* and French. These clubs are well attended and a number are organised specifically for the younger pupils and children in the reception class. There are also satisfactory opportunities for pupils to be involved in a number of sports, with the school entering teams in local competitions. Visits out of school are less well developed, although still satisfactory, with some useful visits made to support the curriculum. The weekly curriculum enhancement afternoons, a new innovation that is enjoyed by all pupils, enable a wide range of activities to be taught in curriculum time, such as sculpture and circus skills. These activities are run by the school's very effective team of teaching assistants, aided by visiting experts. This is a good example of the very good commitment to inclusion in the school, which is also exemplified by the fact that all pupils, from the wide variety of minority ethnic groups, those with special educational needs, those from the traveller community, girls and boys, have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum.
28. The curriculum is adapted well in order to meet the special needs of its pupils. Careful attention is paid to targets on individual education plans (IEPs) when planning work at different, and appropriate, levels. In consequence special needs pupils participate confidently in all aspects of their learning. When pupils are in classes they receive good quality support. This feature is replicated when they take part in withdrawal sessions. When they are withdrawn their work is carefully focused, usually on developing their language and literacy skills effectively. In class support also has this focus but also includes support for developing numeracy and behaviour skills as well when this is necessary. Teaching assistants giving much of the support liaise closely with class and support teachers so that pupils' achievements are being carefully assessed through a thoughtfully devised tracking system.
29. The school has a good number of teachers, which enables pupils to be split into year groups rather than mixed age classes for mathematics and science. The setting<sup>2</sup> this allows in mathematics, in Years 3 to 6, is also effective in allowing teachers to plan their curriculum for this subject more effectively in their desire to raise standards. Teachers know their subjects well and are conversant with the curriculum and planning. The quantity of support staff is matched satisfactorily to the school's needs. They are making a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in supporting inclusion practices and assisting those pupils with special educational needs. However, there are times, particularly in Years 3 to 6 in the afternoon, when teachers do not have sufficient support for the pupils to learn more effectively. The school is well resourced in ICT, thanks to a recent investment in good quality up-to-date equipment. Resources are also good in religious education, where there is a good supply of artefacts from a variety of religions. However, in design and technology, despite considerable recent spending, resources are still unsatisfactory.
30. The school makes the best use of the accommodation, providing a clean, welcoming and stimulating environment that adds positively to the pupils' desire to learn. This is also a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when the cleanliness and presentation of the accommodation was severely criticised. Overall, accommodation is satisfactory. However, one area of the school is unsatisfactory. One Year 2 classroom is very small and has only a partition adjoining a corridor on one side. The size of the room limits opportunities for practical

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<sup>1</sup> Circle time is an opportunity for pupils to discuss issues in their classes, in a less formal and non-judgmental way.

<sup>2</sup> Setting is the grouping of pupils by ability into classes for specific subjects.

activities. Next door, the library is difficult to manage or use effectively as it is a concourse area and is down a couple of steps, therefore making it inaccessible to some less mobile children and adults. The most significant shortcoming is in the adjacent ICT suite. The computers are divided between two areas which are hardly visible from one to the other. There is also a problem when teachers try to gather a whole class to see demonstrations on the whiteboard as there is insufficient space for this. Further, although there is an interactive whiteboard, it cannot be used as such as the projector is not permanently mounted. Yet another weakness is the heat of this area, which is sultry and airless, even at this time of year in November, with no heating on.

## Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils at St Simon and St Jude's has improved and is now **good**. Overall the support, advice and guidance given to them are good also. The school involves pupils in its life soundly, valuing their suggestions and ideas.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are building up very good relationships with pupils, providing them with good role models.
- The school takes good care of its pupils.
- Effective induction arrangements give pupils a good start to their life at St Simon and St Jude's.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, along with dual language learners and those from the traveller community.
- Every child is valued and achievement is celebrated well.
- Some pupils do not know what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

## Commentary

31. This is a caring community where pupils trust staff and take pleasure in friendships with each other. The welfare, support and guidance of pupils are effective and are built on the very good relationships between staff and children. Mutual respect helps to create a secure and safe atmosphere in which learning can take place effectively. The care provided has improved well since the previous inspection; it is now good.
32. The headteacher has relevant training in child protection and follows local guidance. The school plays a full part in the multi-agency response to child protection concerns and recently sent all parents information on the school's policy. The staff are watchful, know the procedures well and are ready to implement them when necessary. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
33. There are now very good arrangements for children joining the reception classes, much better than at the time of the previous inspection. These arrangements, which include home visits and strong links with feeder nurseries and playgroups, help them to settle in quickly and happily. Those pupils who join St Simon and St Jude's at other times are befriended and swiftly made to feel valued members of the school community by all staff and pupils. Pupils enjoy welcoming others to their school, helping them to feel happy and to put down roots. The induction arrangements for all ages are praised by parents.
34. All staff work together to try and make the school environment as safe as possible and the school has improved health and safety well. For example, risk assessments are consistently undertaken; accidents and their outcomes are carefully recorded; safe practices are underlined as a matter of course in lessons and equipment is regularly checked and maintained. Since last year, the new health and safety committee has made good progress in improving this area. All its members have made substantial contributions. The health and safety representative and the site manager ensure that all staff are well briefed and that any reported hazards are dealt with appropriately as soon as possible. The trained midday supervisory assistants competently

oversee the pupils, both in and out of the dining room, and any minor injuries are dealt with sensibly.

35. Achievement is rewarded with praise and celebrated both in class and in assembly, and this approval boosts pupils' confidence and self-esteem, giving added impetus for further progress. Staff also boost pupils' self-esteem consistently, so that they are prepared to tackle and persevere with new areas of learning. *Golden assemblies* celebrate achievements, including good attendance and punctuality, so motivating pupils to do even better.
36. Most teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils very well. They are sensitive to the needs of all pupils and ensure that they are fully involved in class activities. Staff effectively monitor and support the personal development of pupils using such means as formal and informal discussions and, as a result, pastoral care, including that for children at risk, is good. Assessment for the youngest is very thorough in helping them to move onto the next stage of learning. However, teachers' use of assessment does not always help older pupils sufficiently and they are not always sure of what they have to do to progress further. They need more meaningful targets to help them improve. Teachers monitor the progress of pupils who have special needs well. These pupils are identified early, supported well and consequently achieve well throughout the school. Parents are appropriately involved and, when necessary, outside agencies. Pupils who are acquiring English as a further language are given suitable support and, as a result, achievement is good. Traveller children have been welcomed into the school and ably supported by the local education authority's traveller support staff, as well as the school's own staff.
37. Pupils enjoy being involved in the life of the school. The staff take time to listen to their comments and treat their views and suggestions with respect. Most pupils put forward their ideas responsibly and appreciate working as part of the school community. Through such curriculum areas as English and geography, pupils' ideas are canvassed. For example, lower junior pupils wrote to the headteacher outlining ideas for improving the school and its locality. A school council is planned so that pupils have a forum for putting forward their ideas and suggestions.

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

The school's links with parents and the community are **good**. Links with other schools and the local college are good overall. All these relationships enhance and extend pupils' learning opportunities well.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school encourages parents to become involved in the life of the school.
- The school works closely with outside agencies to provide good learning opportunities for parents and pupils.
- The parent teacher association is supportive and active.
- Communication with parents and carers is good.
- Overall links with other schools and the local college are good, but transfer arrangements to secondary schools are not as smooth as they might be.

### **Commentary**

38. Like their children, the parents value what this school offers. They are very satisfied with all that the school provides. They appreciate the caring inclusive ethos and are supportive of its values. They believe it is a happy school.
39. The school has made many efforts to develop better links with parents following the previous inspection. The work of the parental links leader has been crucial in the improvements that

have been made in this key issue from the previous report. The thriving parent/teacher association is run by an enthusiastic committee and supported well by staff and parents. The school now consults parents and carers regularly. Most parents feel the school listens to them and that their views are taken into account. The headteacher is easily approachable in the playground in the morning when he greets pupils and their parents and carers as they arrive at school. The school greatly values the parental support, given both at home and in school, which is having a positive effect on pupils' achievement. One instance of this support is the shared running, with the staff, of the homework club.

40. The school effectively communicates both orally and in writing with parents and carers, both formally and informally. The school community provides translations when there is a need. Attention is drawn to ways in which parents can support their child's learning. The written annual reports on their child's achievement describe progress in detail, with individual targets for improvement. A few parents did not think they were kept well informed about their child's progress, but the inspectors found that the quality of information offered was good and that there were many opportunities to ask for further information. For example, the school has promoted after school drop-in sessions on Mondays, when children can share their work with their parents, who can chat to teachers informally. As far as possible the school establishes close relationships with parents of children with special educational needs. Parents are always invited to reviews of statements and individual education plans and most accept the invitation.
41. Parents extend their knowledge and understanding by attending the fortnightly coffee drop-ins or specific courses, such as, the one focusing on Key Stage 2 national tests. There are also bi-lingual classes. The school works successfully with Bolton Community College, with the aim of raising pupils' achievement through increasing parental involvement in their children's education. Both adults and children benefit from the literacy and numeracy courses. The greater understanding gained helps parents to support their children's learning more effectively. The school greatly values the parental support given both at home and in school, which has a positive effect on pupils' achievement.
42. In addition to the community college, the school works in a flourishing partnership with BEST (Bolton's Behaviour and Education Support Team) and the Forward Centre, a pupil referral unit. School and local based environmental projects are undertaken with the co-operation of Bolton Metro Environmental Education and Enforcement. The new headteacher has joined the local cluster of schools whose aim is to share knowledge and expertise. This exchange is proving fruitful. However, transfer arrangements to the secondary sector are not always as effective as they could be for every pupil. The school is working hard to facilitate an easier transition and has identified closer working with secondary schools as an area for improvement. The staff do their best to ensure that children who move to other primary schools have the relevant documentation to accompany them.
43. Links with the community are used well to support learning and pupils' personal development. The school recognises the importance of local culture, with visitors and visits enriching the curriculum. Community groups, such as Brownies and the local amateur dramatic society, use the building. The school goes to church on various occasions like the leavers' assembly and to celebrate such festivals as harvest. It is currently planning a Christmas carol concert for senior citizens next month at the Emmanuel Church Community Centre.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership.
- Key staff provide very good leadership.

- Governors support the work of the school well.
- Subject leaders manage their areas well.
- Teamwork is a key feature and there is a shared commitment to improvement.

## Commentary

44. The headteacher provides dynamic and inspirational leadership and since his appointment he has realised excellent improvement, at a remarkable pace. He has been very well supported by the deputy headteacher and other committed senior staff in his determination to raise standards. As an effective team, teaching, non-teaching staff and governors are committed to introduce systems and strategies to provide only the best for the children in their care. After analysing areas needing improvement, they have together produced an extremely effective school improvement plan. Teaching and non-teaching staff thrive on the added opportunity to be involved in the decision making process and have been involved in driving improvement.
45. Systems to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been introduced. Performance management has been successful in motivating teaching staff and non-teaching staff are enthusiastic about their developing roles. Support staff are well trained, used effectively and are vital in the planning of improvement. They are eager to use their skills to improve the quality of teaching and learning as is evident during the enrichment sessions.
46. Governors are enthusiastic about their newly created roles. An effective committee structure has been established and governors are keen to rise to the challenge, not only to support the school, but also to evaluate and monitor performance. In the last year, they have developed a clearer vision of their responsibilities and made strides to fulfil their duties. Decisions have included reviewing the management of the cleaning, tidiness and security of the school with a determination to provide 'best value'. They are now much better informed and have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement.
47. Key staff had already made a good contribution to the quality of leadership and management since the last inspection, with their influence being increasingly more focused and a greater pace since the appointment of the new headteacher. The Foundation Stage is led and managed very well. The leader and her effective team ensure that the many children who enter the reception classes with a range of home languages successfully develop bilingual speaking and reading skills. Subject leaders have contributed effectively to the quality of the curriculum. For example, where lessons are monitored the quality of teaching has improved. Pupils with special educational needs, those from the traveller community, and dual language learners are managed equally well leading to good achievement. Close attention is paid to assessing pupils' needs as early as possible and targets are set for them in the individual education plans. Curriculum leaders have recently created increasingly more exciting and challenging experiences for pupils with the enrichment afternoon adding a new dimension to the quality of learning.
48. Lesson planning is carried out consistently well, and all subjects now indicate the gains to be made in skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupil attainment is being analysed to identify areas for development. The recently introduced tracking system of pupils' progress will enable teachers to build on the good start which children make in the reception classes. Priority is now being given to using this data in order to set challenging improvement targets for everyone.
49. Day-to-day administration is capably managed by the school secretary freeing the headteacher to concentrate on driving the school forwards. The finance clerk has been instrumental in developing effective systems for both long term and day-to-day financial management. The site manager has transformed the appearance and cleanliness of the learning environment. Governors now analyse expenditure and are rigorous in their management of the school's finances. Prudent financial planning matched to priorities for improvement and careful budget monitoring ensure that the school is able to meet its commitment to raising standards; managing the workforce more effectively; embedding management systems and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

50. The very good improvement since the last inspection now ensures that the school no longer has serious weaknesses and gives satisfactory value for money.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	940010
Total expenditure	914242
Expenditure per pupil	2770

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	28385
Balance carried forward to the next	24403

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

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

51. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good** and is a strength of the school. This is a good improvement since the last inspection.
52. Children receive a good start to their education in the reception classes. Teaching is consistently good. Children benefit from a good well-planned curriculum, which takes account of the differing needs. There is a good balance between self-selected and adult directed activities with a strong emphasis on learning through play and a clear focus on the development of literacy skills. The leadership and management of the reception classes are very good. Effective teamwork ensures the full inclusion of all children. The nursery nurses and those who support dual language learners make a valuable contribution to children's learning. Very good assessment procedures are in place. Information from these is used very effectively to plan the next stages of learning and set individual targets. Children are prepared well to transfer to Year 1.
53. Children start in the reception classes in the September of the year in which they will be five. Although many have had some pre-school experience a significant minority have not. At the time of the inspection there were forty-eight children in the reception classes, twenty-three of whom did not have English as their first language. Of these twenty-three, eleven children had very little or no understanding of English. These children are very well supported and, as a result, achieve as well as others in the class. One child with special educational needs is in the process of being statemented. Very good induction procedures ease the transition from home to school and establish good links with parents who are very positive about the start their children receive in the reception classes. Attainment on entry to school is well below average, particularly in relation to speaking any other literacy skills. Achievement is good overall as a result of good teaching. Although most children achieve well, many of them will not have reached all their targets for all the areas of learning, but they will have made considerable progress towards them.

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

Provision in this area of learning is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good and children achieve well as a result.
- Classroom routines are well established.
- Personal, social and emotional development is integral to all class activities and is effective.

#### **Commentary**

54. Skills in this area of learning are well below those expected when children first start school. These skills develop well within the reception classes as a result of the well-planned activities, good teaching, very good relationships and high expectations of the adults. Children quickly learn classroom routines. They are expected to behave well and listen carefully to instructions. The majority participate enthusiastically in all the activities provided. Adults provide good role models for children, who are happy to come to school and keen to learn.
55. Children are encouraged to share, take turns to speak and listen to each other. The good opportunities for children to select activities for themselves contribute well to developing independence and self-esteem. They are expected to take responsibility for clearing their workspace at the end of activities and most do so obediently.

56. Attitudes to learning are positive. The adults use snack time very effectively to promote social skills and personal development well. Although some children are likely to achieve the expected goals for this area of learning, a significant proportion will be below the level expected by the time they enter Year 1.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below those expected for children of this age in particular speaking skills for many children.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Children achieve well, although most are unlikely to achieve the early learning goals at the end of reception.

### Commentary

57. When children start in the reception classes standards are well below average, particularly speaking skills. Achievement is good in developing spoken English with many opportunities to engage children in discussion, one to one conversations and questioning. Children make good progress because teaching is good and they are very well supported with good timely intervention from the language support assistant enabling all children to have full access to the lesson. In spite of well-planned experiences speaking skills remain below average at the end of the reception year.
58. Children enjoy listening to stories, which are read and told with expression and feeling. Good use is made of multicultural stories, such as *Handa's Surprise*. Good links are made between the spoken and written word, as in the story of the *Gingerbread Man*. The children's imaginations are captured when told the gingerbread man has run away and is hiding somewhere in the school. They help the teacher to prepare a notice for the classroom window asking parents to help them to find him. Thus is a very meaningful experience for the children who receive a parcel of ginger biscuits for the snack from the gingerbread man. Learning is fun as a result of imaginative teaching which links all areas of learning through the story. The careful teaching of basic skills ensures children handle books correctly. They are interested in the illustrations, turn pages carefully and are beginning to retell the story from the illustrations in a number of cases.
59. Small numbers of high attainers recognise initial and final sounds and are beginning to identify the middle sound. They read accurately with good recall, identifying the characters in their book and making use of the picture clues to help them make sense of the text. Books are sent home, together with a reading diary, maintained by the teacher. Writing skills are well below average. Children are beginning to write their name, about half do so independently, but letter formation is not yet secure for a significant majority. Good opportunities are provided for early writing through well-structured play activities in The pet shop, home corner and investigation area. In a good lesson seen, high attainers attempted to write their own speech bubbles for the gingerbread man. They were well challenged in this task, whilst the language support assistant retold the story with a small group of children with little understanding of English. *The Runaway Chappati* was told in the children's mother tongue and translated to enable them to understand. In spite of good progress, the majority are unlikely to achieve the early learning goals at the end of the reception year.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are below average at the end of reception.
- Achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good and basic number skills are reinforced well.
- Well-planned practical activities enable children to learn well.

### **Commentary**

60. When children start in the reception classes standards are well below average. They make good progress and achieve well as a result of good teaching and well planned practical activities, carefully matched to needs and abilities. Number rhymes and songs support children's learning well, effectively reinforcing sequencing and counting skills. A small number of higher attainers count to 10 and beyond. They form numbers correctly and can sequence numbers to 10. They understand 'one more than' and can solve simple problems such as  $10-1=9$ . Average attainers sometimes reverse numbers and do not always form numbers accurately. Children are beginning to recognise 1p, 2p and 5p coins with good use made of the pet shop.
61. Higher attainers recognise and name common shapes and know some simple properties of such shapes, whilst average children recognise a circle and triangle in some cases. The adults extend mathematical language well in lessons, emphasising comparative and positional language. Well-chosen practical activities linked to the gingerbread man help to consolidate sorting and matching. Activities using sand and water extend mathematical language and help children to understand terms such as full and empty. Standards are below average at the end of reception. In spite of the good progress made, most children are unlikely to achieve all the early learning goals in mathematical development.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision in this area of learning is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are below average at the end of the reception year.
- Teaching and learning are good enabling children to achieve well.
- Very good questioning by the adults challenges children and extends thinking skills well.
- Classroom displays contribute well to this area of learning.

### **Commentary**

62. Children enter the reception classes with well below average standards in this area of learning. The good teaching and well structured activities and experiences help them to achieve well in extending their knowledge and understanding of the world. Lessons are very well planned and linked effectively to other areas of learning. The children explore a range of fruits following the story *Handa's Surprise*. They use their different senses, make observational drawings and describe what they can see, feel and taste. They know some foods are healthy and can name some unhealthy foods. They increase their knowledge of parts of the body through practical tasks, making a figure using split pins and drawing a picture. A significant number lack awareness of the names of parts of the body. In a science activity they use root vegetables to make soup, describing the colour, shape and size of the vegetables. Many have very limited knowledge of vegetable names. Higher attainers attempt to make a list of vegetables. The adults highlight the changes to the vegetables through cooking. Similar activities have involved the children in making porridge and bread. They use magnets and explore using iron filings.

They are familiar with some Bible stories such as The Nativity Story. They know that the Qu'ran is a special book for Muslims and draw pictures of the stand for the Qu'ran. Very good questioning by the adults extends their knowledge and understanding well and challenges them to think more deeply. Good displays support the learning well in this area.

63. Pupils are aware of changes in the seasons and weather. Less apparent are early skills in ICT. Visits and visitors contribute well to children's learning. Through stories, children develop an awareness of simple route maps such as the journey by Goldilocks through the woods to the Three Bears' Cottage. Well-structured role-play such as in the pet shop, and timely intervention supports such learning well. In spite of good gains in learning, many children are unlikely to achieve the expected learning goals by the time they start Year 1.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

64. No judgement is made about provision for this area as only a brief part of a lesson was seen. Children have regular access to the hall and to the outside area. In the part of the hall lesson seen, children joined in well with the game *The Farmers in the den*. They followed the sequence well, moving safely, with respect of one another's space. The teacher used the opportunity to reinforce personal and social skills as they worked co-operatively with the expected level of skill. Well-structured activities involve children in cutting, sticking, painting and moulding. They learn to control brushes and pencils with increasing skill. The stick and paste competently although several are not secure with scissor skills, and a significant number will not achieve all the early learning goals in fine motor control by the end of reception.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in this area of learning is **good**.

### Strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average at the end of reception.
- Children achieve well as a result of very good teaching.
- Support staff make a valuable contribution to children's learning.
- Children receive a good range of experiences.

### Commentary

65. Standards are average at the end of the reception year with many children likely to achieve the targets for the area of learning because of very good teaching, well-organised activities and good resources.
66. Children have good opportunities to explore a variety of media including paint, dough, collage material, printing activities and drawing. In addition they have access to a good range of construction materials and small world activities. Most use brushes, scissors and glue spreaders with reasonable skill, although a significant number lack the control needed with scissors and pencils. Patterns using different shades of blue are displayed attractively to illustrate colour mixing.
67. Three-dimensional models for the pet shop and collage snowman, together with patterns in the style of Damien Hirst, are examples of activities undertaken. Threading skills are well practised through sewing activities to make gingerbread men and bookmarks. The children enjoy singing and music making. Very good opportunities are provided for them to explore a range of untuned percussion instruments which they handle carefully. The class teacher ensures the instruments are held and played correctly as the children beat out name patterns, taking turns to lead the class. They clap name patterns and other rhythmic patterns, using a range of body

percussion. They can identify high and low notes in some cases as well as fast and slow, loud and quiet sounds. In this lesson many children were achieving at the appropriate level because of the careful skill development and very good teaching.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

### ENGLISH

The provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils are achieving satisfactorily overall throughout the school.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Recent changes are underpinning improvements.
- Not enough use is made of individual targets to boost standards and achievement.

#### COMMENTARY

68. Standards are below average overall at the end of Year 6 and remain at a level similar to those reported at the last inspection. Since the recent appointment of the present headteacher there is a very clear steer towards raising standards. Recent changes to policy and the appointment of joint leaders to work closely with the deputy headteacher are underpinning a determined drive towards this goal. The whole staff subscribes towards achieving this agreed goal for the benefit of all of the school's pupils. Pupils with special needs and those who are dual language learners receive good levels of support and make good progress.
69. The pupils' speaking and listening skills are given an appropriate amount of attention throughout the school. They are reaching average standards by the end of Year 6. In infant classes pupils are well engaged in whole class discussions at the beginning of most English lessons. Class teachers pointedly ask questions of a wide range of pupils in this part of their lessons. They patiently break down pupils' answers so that there is a good level of engagement. This is a practice that is continued profitably in junior classes. Teachers in Year 5/6 classes are more astutely choosing texts that are interesting to both boys and girls. Answers to questions develop skills from a wide range of pupils. This is more skilfully capturing the pupils' attentiveness to developing their speaking and listening than in Year 3/4 classes. The speaking and listening skills are further well developed in Year 5/6 classes through systematically well-organised debates. There is a variety of foci in the debates such as the merits or otherwise of fox hunting and cheating. These expertly encourage maturity in thinking being translated into effective speaking skills. In order to respond the pupils listen with growing care and thoughtfulness and so they achieve well. Written comments are made to confirm these developing skills in attractive wall displays.
70. Standards in reading are below average by the end of Year 6. However, there is an inconsistency between year groups, which means that in Years 1 and 5 standards are more average. Pupils have home/school diaries that are beginning to track their progress more fruitfully. There are still too many gaps in the pupils' knowledge of how letters blend together to form the words in the infant classes. Teachers are beginning to work at developing understanding of this more systematically as a result of more sharpness in the policy. In junior classes there is too little attention paid in some classes to the consistency with which pupils read to adults outside group reading times. Comprehensive understanding in reading is not being developed consistently as a result. In the main, pupils are enthusiastic about reading. Pupils with special needs and those who are dual language learners benefit from high quality support that helps them to make good gains in reading. Higher attaining pupils read with expression and fluency in the main.
71. Standards in writing are below average overall. In the infant classes not enough opportunities have been taken until recently to develop writing skills across the curriculum. More recently the pupils have begun to develop extended writing skills as part of a whole school focus on writing. This is just beginning to be helpful in improving the pupils' writing skills in both infant and junior

classes. Key features in instructional writing in Year 2 classes are supporting pupils well. Good resource choices made by teachers of using interesting posters capture the pupils' thinking skills. In junior classes by Year 6 the pupils are considering the differences between biography and autobiography. They are beginning to show an ability to write in different styles as a result. Although handwriting skills are being given systematic attention there is less consistency in the approaches to developing spelling skills. This is not helping to support writing as well as it might.

72. Teachers follow the National Literacy Strategy in their planning. Lessons are prepared well. Good teaching is now consistently helping pupils to make good progress in their learning. Achievement is only satisfactory because the improvements in teaching have not had an impact on overall achievement. Support staff are well deployed and give effective support to all pupils that they work with. This is when they are supporting special needs or English language needs on an individual withdrawal or small group basis in classrooms. Most marking is much improved because it annotates work skilfully in infant classes and indicates clearly how work can be improved in the junior classes. However, this needs to be applied more consistently in order to assess skills being achieved accurately so that meaningful targets are set for pupils.
73. The system of joint co-ordination with the helpful support of the deputy headteacher to ensure consistency of approach is working beneficially for the school. As a team they have been instrumental in bringing about changes in approaches to developing English skills in all its aspects in order to raise standards. The need to do this is at the forefront of their well-constructed action plan. They are giving good leadership to the subject at an early stage. Resources are being managed well. An adequate library is set up in central areas in infant and junior parts of the school.

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

74. The use of language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. However, there are still many missed opportunities to develop the use of written skills consistently in subjects such as history and religious education. Speaking and listening skills are improving across the wider curriculum.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards remain below what is expected nationally by the age of seven and eleven.
- Achievement in lessons is good for all pupils regardless of age or ability.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and pupils enjoy mathematics.
- The leadership of mathematics is very good.
- Relationships are very good; behaviour is very good and pupils enjoy their learning.
- Target setting is not used consistently as a tool for improvement.

### **Commentary**

75. Standards in mathematics have remained stubbornly low since the last inspection. An analysis of work undertaken since the beginning of this school year indicates that the organisation of pupils into single age grouping with pupils more closely grouped according to ability from Year 2 upwards has enabled teaching to be more closely focused and standards have begun to improve. Findings during the inspection indicate that in lessons standards in the upper sets are now much closer to the expected levels for pupils at the ages of seven and eleven. Achievement over time is satisfactory but in lessons pupils achieved well, making good

progress regardless of ability, background or gender. The limited use of targets is a missed opportunity to boost achievement.

76. As well as increasing the quality of speaking skills, teachers check that pupils understand the mathematical skills and processes being used. Priority has been given to learning table facts and demanding that pupils explain what they are doing and why they are doing it. All of which is boosting achievement for pupils of all abilities.
77. Most pupils in the upper set in Year 6 have sound knowledge of place value to one thousand and compare fractions with decimals and percentages. All pupils have a sound knowledge of the properties of two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects and have acquired a sound range of strategies to solve problems. Higher attaining pupils use all four processes to two places of decimals and choose from the wide range of strategies taught when solving problems. They use simple formulae when calculating perimeters of irregular shapes. Similarly, emphasis is placed upon understanding for pupils of lower ability and they use sound strategies to carry out their calculations. Mental skills are soundly developed and lower ability pupils are eager to demonstrate their good recall of table facts.
78. Standards in Year 2 have increased since the reorganisation into groups of closer ability with a larger proportion of pupils attaining the higher level three. Pupils understand patterns and sequences of number to 100 plus, and show good mental skills when solving multiplication facts using 2, 3, 4 and 5 times tables.
79. Teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Where teaching was less effective introductions were too long giving pupils less time to complete tasks. Where teaching was most effective, in Years 2 and 6, pupils were highly motivated by the range of strategies used and they shared their teachers' enthusiasm for mathematics. Effective planning ensures that pupils benefit from being challenged in sets where the pace of learning is better matched to ability. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and teaching assistants are managed very well to support specific groups and individuals. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are dual language learners achieve equally well. The quality of teaching and learning benefits from the vastly improved behaviour. Pupils enjoy their learning, have good attitudes and prosper from the very good relationships which encourage pupils to be more fully involved in lessons. Standards are set to improve.
80. The subject leader leads and manages mathematics very well and her action plans have identified areas for development which then feed in to the school improvement plan. She has contributed significantly to the upward trend in standards over the last year by monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and arranging professional development to raise awareness of the numeracy strategy. She has analysed test results thoroughly for each year group in order to identify areas for development and progress is now recorded consistently well. The next stage is to use this information in order to set group and individual targets for improvement. Included in her action plan is the use of computers for pupils to extend and apply their skills and knowledge. Marking varies in quality. At its best, in the leader's class, pupils have a clear indication of the skills they have used, '*You have used this strategy well*'; and '*Can you see where you went wrong?*' when guiding them to improve.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

81. The use of mathematical skills to support learning in other areas of the curriculum is satisfactory. Frequency charts and tables are used to record investigations in science; thermometers are used in Year 3 when testing insulation; co-ordinates and scales in geography, and timelines when studying the Tudors in history.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The focus on science investigations gives pupils a secure understanding about how to plan, set up and record their activities.
- Standards are below average for both the seven and eleven-year-olds.
- Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and pupils achieve well.
- The curriculum is carefully planned so that all elements are covered.
- There are incomplete systems for assessing and tracking how well the pupils are doing.
- The lack of individual targets limits the pupils' knowledge about their performance,

### **Commentary**

82. Pupils enjoy their science lessons, which are interesting and exciting and they hold pupils' attention well. Teachers are secure when teaching the subject and the curriculum is broad and balanced. The extensive review of curriculum and planning has strengthened the subject significantly, all of which is a very good improvement since the previous inspection.
83. Standards are below average across the board. That said, pupils' achievement is improving. It is satisfactory in Years 1 to 4 and good in Years 5 and 6. Teachers are working hard to ensure that pupils understand their science activities. For example, in a Year 6 lesson on how light travels, the pupils had limited understanding at the start of the lesson but by the end of the lesson many of them used their new knowledge about light travelling to explain the formation of shadows correctly.
84. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a number of strengths and no significant weaknesses. Additional training has improved teachers' planning, as well as their knowledge of science. A specialist teacher has recently begun teaching science to many classes in the school, and this is boosting achievement for higher, average and lower attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have work that is pitched at the right level for their capabilities and their achievement is satisfactory, as it is for those pupils who are dual language speakers.
85. As pupils' literacy skills improve then their ability to record the findings of their investigations also improve, especially as they move through Years 3 to 6. Work in pupils' books is marked well, giving them clear pointers about what needs to be done to improve their presentation or to extend their understanding. Progress is slower in Years 1 and 2 because pupils' writing skills fall short of expectations. Overall, previous gaps in learning hold back pupils' progress but these are being identified and tackled systematically on a class-by-class basis. The next stage is to introduce an effective system for tracking progress and achievement throughout the school so the process is streamlined. This will also help staff to identify pupils' future learning targets.
86. The subject leader has a very clear grasp of the issues and her leadership is good. She has worked closely with specialists from the local education authority to boost teaching and learning and to give staff confidence. Teaching and learning are monitored and the subject is managed well. Science has moved forward well under her guidance.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Achievement is unsatisfactory over time but is good in lessons.
- Very good progress has been made since last inspection.
- The school now has a good range of up-to-date hardware.
- There are no systems of assessment in place.
- Standards are below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- There are some shortcomings with the ICT suite.

### **Commentary**

87. Raising standards in ICT was a key issue at the last inspection. Progress has been hindered by the lack of suitable computer hardware. This has been tackled but the new equipment has only been up and running over the last two weeks and standards are below average. A new scheme of work and a comprehensive training programme for staff means that teaching and learning have improved. Many pupils are still becoming familiar with the technical skills of logging on to the system and managing mouse and menu skills. In some aspects of the subject standards are as expected. For example, the pupils in Years 5 and 6 have produced presentations on the *Animals of the Rainforest* for pupils in Year 2. These presentations are very sensitive to the needs of these younger pupils and show that the pupils have used material from a variety of sources and combined and amended it satisfactorily. Achievement is good.
88. Teaching and learning in lessons was generally good, with one lesson being very good. Teachers have good knowledge of the hardware and the programs that they are using, indicating that training has been effective. Teachers plan and organise their lessons well, giving a clear structure to the pupils' learning but the lack of formal assessment limits pupils' progress. Lessons that are less successful, though still satisfactory, are sometimes affected by the constraints of the ICT suite. The school has identified this issue and plans are in hand to address it.
89. The subject is led well and there is a very clear development plan for ICT which is giving the subject good direction. The leader has ensured that all aspects of the subject are at least satisfactorily resourced, with the ICT suite being well equipped. There has been good support from the education authority, whose advisor has assisted with development. The school has made the sensible decision to lease its new hardware. This results in regular technical assistance being available to deal with any problems which arise. There is little monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject, although pupils' work is monitored. There is also no consistent system of assessment to check whether the pupils are learning and achieving satisfactorily.

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

90. Although the use of ICT across the curriculum is not fully included in planning, most teachers use it well. Each class is timetabled for a lesson in the ICT suite where this is to be addressed and some good examples were seen during the inspection. For instance, Year 1 classes were using a word bank in a word processing program to reinforce their learning on sources of light in science. In Year 2, pupils were creating pictures in the style of Mondrian to support their work in art and design. Years 3 and 4 pupils were combining words and pictures to illustrate their work in geography.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Religious education**

The provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are below average.
- Achievement is satisfactory.
- The curriculum is closely matched to the agreed syllabus followed by local schools.

### **Commentary**

91. Standards in religious education are below average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, largely because of the difficulties that pupils have in recording accurately. Their knowledge is sound. Pupils with special educational needs, and those that are dual language learners, achieve as well as others in their class because they are well supported in lessons. Achievement overall is satisfactory although the behaviour of a minority of Year 3/4 pupils prevents them from achieving as well as they should in lessons.
92. The curriculum is closely matched to the locally agreed syllabus. During their time in school pupils build steadily on their knowledge and understanding of Christianity as well as learning about different faiths including Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. They are encouraged to recognise the similarities and differences between religions. For example comparisons were made between Advent and the Swedish festival of light in Years 3/4.
93. In the infant classes the focus is mainly on learning about religion, building knowledge of the main festivals, celebrations and stories in Christianity as well as Hinduism and Islam. For example, pupils are familiar with some of the parables such as *The Good Samaritan* and stories such as *Noah's Ark*. They know the Bible is a special book for Christians and that it is divided into the Old and New Testament and they are aware of festivals and celebrations such as Christingle, Diwali and Eid. Recording of work is limited, however, and it is hampered by weaknesses in literacy skills.
94. Improved planning ensures a more systematic development of skills and experiences, particularly in the junior classes, where delivery of the curriculum is more consistent. Pupils in the junior classes have a sound knowledge *about* religion. Learning *from* religion remains weak although this is now beginning to be addressed in planning and through teaching. Good questioning was observed in a Year 5/6 class for example which promoted deeper thinking, reflecting on the use of light in pupils' lives and across different faiths. Pupils reflect upon their own feelings when considering who is important to them, and who they trust in the way the disciples trusted Jesus. The majority of pupils respond positively in lessons but behaviour of a minority of pupils in the Year 3/4 classes is unsatisfactory and impedes the progress of some lessons.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. There is good attention to the rich diversity of cultures and religions within the school. Good quality displays reflect the different faiths and are well resourced. A prayer room is set up for Ramadan. Pupils have the opportunity to visit the Christian Church and the Mosque. Increased links to art and literacy encourage pupils to reflect on the significance of some religious paintings, to write poems and create music.
96. The subject leader is committed to her work and provides sound management. Planning and resources have contributed to the steady improvement overall in religious education. Assessment and monitoring have yet to be fully developed in order to have the desired impact on standards. At present there is no planned provision for the use of ICT in the subject. This is recognised as an area for further development. The subject continues to make a satisfactory contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Geography and history**

97. These two subjects were sampled during this inspection. The organisation of the curriculum means that geography and history are taught in different year groups during the course of the year. It was only possible to observe one geography lesson in the lower juniors. Scrutiny of work around the school, alongside discussions, and an analysis of the curricular provision, indicates that all aspects of the subject are covered. The current geography focus is on environmental issues with Year 3/4 classes. It is evident from the displays and discussions that pupils are approaching their work in a mature way. There is not enough secure evidence to make a judgement about standards or achievement.
98. It was only possible to observe one history lesson with a Year 5/6 class but evidence from the displays of work, as well as discussions, show that history curriculum is covered appropriately. Displays about the Romans and Guy Fawkes indicate some sound work in the infant classes. In junior classes the current emphasis is on Sir Francis Drake. The small sample of very recent work on Drake's voyages from the well-informed, hard working leader's class is good quality work. It is not possible to make secure judgements about standards or achievement on the limited evidence.
99. The subjects are soundly managed and the subject leaders have a clear grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Their action plans reflect a secure approach to future developments. Resources are satisfactory and appropriate curricula are in place. There are no formal systems for assessing how well the pupils are doing and this is a weakness.

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

### **Art and design**

100. There was insufficient evidence to make a firm judgement on the provision of art and design although evidence from the quality of display; analysis of planning; and discussion with the subject leader indicates that the requirements of the National Curriculum are well met and that pupils have a good awareness of artists and experience a range of media. Pupils have experienced different papers, hessian, felt and silk as a base for their creations. Art and design makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development through an appreciation of the beauty created and their cultural development is strengthened through a greater understanding of artists and their styles.
101. In the one lesson seen when depicting the Red Horseman by Liechtenstein the quality of teaching and learning was very good with pupils well prepared to identify the features of movement. Pupils demonstrated good speaking and listening skills and self-evaluation was used to guide pupils in small groups. Teachers value pupils' efforts greatly and displays of pupils' work is mounted tastefully, adding significantly to the quality of the learning environment. Examples of works by Van Gogh, Picasso, Matisse and Lowry demonstrate an understanding of skills and materials used, and visiting artists have added to the gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. Teaching and non-teaching staff give generously of their time with after school club activities enabling pupils to practise and extend their skills.
102. Leadership is good. The subject leader has managed art and design well and has provided guidelines for improvement. The collections of pupils' art work from each year group helps her to monitor progress. Her action plan includes the need to record gains in skills and knowledge and to identify more clearly areas for improvement in teaching and learning.

### **Design and technology**

103. Only one lesson was observed in design and technology and no overall judgements could be made about provision in the subject. Other evidence of past projects, and work under way,

suggests that standards are below average overall. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 do not have sufficiently clear knowledge of the full design process. One of the reasons for the below average standards is that resources for the subjects are unsatisfactory. The school follows a nationally recognised scheme of work and the leader has adapted this well to a two-year rolling programme so that pupils do not repeat work. Although the leader has not had an opportunity to monitor teaching and learning, she has a clear grasp of strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to raise standards.

## **Music**

104. No lessons were observed but pupils were heard to sing during assembly times. They sang tunefully, holding the beat soundly as they sang songs and hymns. Extra-curricular instrumental and singing sessions enhance the basic provision in music. Two members of staff have a caretaking role, which they manage well. The subject leader's file is well organised with strengths and weaknesses in the subject clearly identified and tackled.

## **Physical education**

105. This subject was sampled during the inspection. A limited number of lessons were seen, mostly in dance. Standards in dance are satisfactory and pupils' achievement is good. Attitudes to learning are positive and relationships are very good, all of which promote effective learning.

106. Teaching is good overall in dance. The good teaching was characterised by very good relationships and the use of a good range of motivational strategies. Teachers valued pupils' contributions and guided them to continually refine the quality of their movement. Good management skills demanded high standards of behaviour and pupils enjoyed their experiences. In the one very good lesson in Year 2, the teacher demonstrated high expectations and pupils were highly motivated. The pace of learning was brisk, and she constantly challenged pupils to improve by challenging pupils to evaluate, *'What made it good?'* Pupils achieved very well including those with special educational needs and those who are dual language learners.

107. The subject management is good and there is a clear grasp of what needs to be done to improve. Assessment procedures are at an early stage of development and do not record gains in skills and understanding. Planning indicates that the requirements of the National Curriculum, including swimming, are met. Older boys and girls extend their team building skills in after school club activities and in competitive matches against other schools, enhancing the overall provision of physical education in school.

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

Provision in personal, social, health education and citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership of the area is good.
- There is no formal scheme of work that ensures complete coverage.
- Standards are above average because of specific teaching and other informal provision.
- The school held a highly successful and well-planned personal, social, health education and citizenship (PSHCE) week.

### **Commentary**

108. Although there is no formal scheme of work, the leader has checked that all necessary aspects are being covered. Most of the health aspects are covered in science, for example healthy eating in Year 2 and sex and relationships education in Years 5 and 6. There are very good systems for encouraging pupils' personal and social development. These include the consistently applied behaviour policy and weekly circle time sessions in each class. The leader recognises that citizenship is an area for development. For example, although pupils take on a number of responsibilities and are very aware of the needs of others, both in the school and in the wider world, the school is planning to start a school council.

109. One of the highlights of the provision was a PSHCE week, organised by the leader. A great deal of hard work went into this week and it was regarded as being highly successful by pupils and parents as well as by staff. A wide range of opportunities was planned, with a very good number of visitors coming into school to share their expertise and experiences. For example:

- the 'Life Caravan' visited with a drugs awareness message;
- there was a visitor to talk on 'Blind Awareness';
- the police and fire service visited;
- the pupils in reception and Years 1 and 2 had a visitor to demonstrate oral hygiene;
- Years 3 to 6 had health talks from the school nurse;
- the Education Authority behaviour modification team were involved.

110. As well as all these, there were a range of activities to raise the pupils' awareness of a healthy lifestyle, for example fitness sessions and healthy eating talks. This week was very successful in raising the profile of the aspect and in increasing the whole school awareness of a healthy lifestyle. The success of the week was largely the result of the leader's very good planning and hard work, and indication of the quality of her leadership.

## **PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

**Inspection judgement****Grade**

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</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	4

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>5</b>
Pupils' achievement	4

<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	3

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
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).*

