

INSPECTION REPORT

ST AIDAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Winstanley, Wigan

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106463

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Mason

Lead inspector: Mr David Carrington

Dates of inspection: 7th - 9th February 2005

Inspection number: 267721

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 3 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 344
School address: Holmes House Avenue
Winstanley
Wigan
Postcode: WN3 6EE
Telephone number: (01942) 223 544
Fax number: (01942) 222 634
Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr David Shirley
governors:
Date of previous 17th May 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School is located in the Winstanley district of Wigan, about two miles southwest of the town centre. The school serves the whole parish and draws pupils from a wide area. The school is of above average size for a primary school. There are 168 boys and 176 girls at the school and there are another 20 boys and 23 girls who attend the nursery on a part-time basis.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average. There are four pupils with statements. This is also average. There are a few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and a broadly average proportion are at an early stage of English acquisition.

A significant proportion of pupils leave school before Year 6 in order to complete their primary education in schools that feed secondary schools other than the designated one.

The Catholic, Christian values underpinning the school Mission Statement, *Encouraging each other to develop... abilities to the full*, are the basis of its work.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1541 4	Mr David Carrington	Lead inspector	Mathematics Music
9188	Mrs Jane McHugh	Lay inspector	
1834 6	Mr Rod Bristow	Team inspector	Science Geography History English as an additional language
1189	Mrs Sharon Brown	Team inspector	English
2000 7	Mr Trevor Neat	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Physical education Special educational needs
1976 5	Mrs Pauleen Shannon	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

All at St Aidan's Catholic Primary School go about their work in a cheerful and determined manner. The quality of provision is good and the school is **effective** in ensuring pupils achieve well. Standards are above average overall by the end of Year 6. Teaching and learning are consistently good and expectations are high. There is a very positive, warm and welcoming atmosphere in school, and pupils become mature and sensible learners. The school is led and managed very well, particularly by the very astute and wise headteacher and deputy headteacher. The school gives **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well, and by the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and music, and they are average in science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Teaching and learning are of good quality in all parts of the school.
- The headteacher has high aspirations and expectations and, together with the very effective deputy headteacher, she leads the school very well.
- The ethos of the school is very good; pupils behave well, their attitudes to learning are very good and relationships are a significant strength.
- The curriculum has been developed and improved very effectively and offers considerable richness, especially in pupils' creative development.
- Provision in the Foundation Stage is effective and this enables the children to settle well and to make a good start to their learning.
- The school welcomes all pupils, regardless of background, and it provides well for them all. The partnership with a local special school is of outstanding quality.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and prevents the totally effective development of some skills, particularly for speaking and listening.
- Writing standards have been improved well, but some aspects are ripe for enhancement.
- The target setting and tracking process is bedding in well, but the marking of pupils' work is not linked well enough to the targets.

The school has made **good** improvement since its previous inspection in 1999. Higher attaining pupils achieve well, and standards in ICT are average through the school. There is a good, and consistent, quality of teaching, which has impacted well on the provision for pupils with special educational needs. There are improved outdoor facilities for children in the Foundation Stage and provision in music is now a considerable strength, which contributes strongly to pupils' creativity. Governors are much more involved in the monitoring of school performance and they ensure that attendance statistics are properly reported to parents.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

The following table shows the trends in results in the Year 6 national tests in recent years. In 2004 standards in the Year 6 tests were above average overall, with a particular strength in English.

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

mathematics	A	B	C	C
science	A	C	C	C

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

There have been different proportions of pupils with learning difficulties in the Year 6 classes over this three-year period. Also, more recently, a significant proportion of higher attaining pupils have left the school before Year 6 in order to attend primary schools that feed into other secondary schools. This significantly affected the overall standards.

Achievement is **good**. Results in this year's national tests in Year 6 are likely to be above average in English and mathematics and average in science. Standards are also above average in music and are average in ICT, reflecting good improvement since the previous inspection. The presentation of pupils' written work is not as good as found in many primary schools.

Attendance is above average. Pupils enjoy being in school and show very positive attitudes. Their behaviour is good and they enjoy very good relationships with other pupils and with the adults in school. Pupils' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. There is considerable excellent, and much very good teaching in school, which supports the pupils' good achievement in positive ways. Pupils are encouraged to work hard; they are expected to behave well and all are expected to do their best. They respond enthusiastically and build knowledge, skills and understanding at good rates. Pupils become sensible, mature and responsible learners.

Assessment is of good quality, though there is a need to tie the marking of pupils' work more effectively to the targets set for individuals. Opportunities for pupils to self-assess their work are good. This contributes strongly to pupils' determination to work well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

In all, leadership and management are of **very good** quality and governance is **good**. The headteacher has set high expectations of her staff and these have been met well by the very talented and committed team of teachers, teaching assistants and other adults. There is a very strong partnership between the very capable deputy headteacher and the headteacher, who together have steered the school to good improvement and effective provision. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and they are increasingly asking critical questions to ensure that the school provides best value in terms of its purchases and in the quality and effectiveness of what it provides.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the school in high regard. There are a few concerns about the information they receive about their children's progress, but the school is working well to remedy the gaps in the information provided. The pupils think their school is good. As one pupil wrote, 'I think its grayt...'

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- As time and funding permits, work to improve the quality of the accommodation in order to permit the full development of all skills.
- Enhance the quality of pupils' written presentation and neatness.
- Make sure that the marking of pupils' work is tied consistently to the targets set for pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Standards are **above average** and achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good throughout the school.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and music and average in science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- A significant proportion of higher attaining pupils leave the school before Year 6, which has a major impact on standards.
- Some skills cannot be developed to their maximum because of the limitations of the accommodation.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are as successful in their learning as the other pupils and their achievement is good.
- The quality of pupils' written presentation and neatness is in need of improvement.

Commentary

1. Since the previous inspection, staff have worked successfully to raise standards and ensure that achievement is consistent across the school. It is evident that achievement is good in the Foundation Stage and in the infant and junior phases of the school. Children start in the nursery with a broad range of skills and knowledge, though the overall level is average. They progress well in all six areas of learning experienced in the Foundation Stage and most children in reception are well on course to attain their early learning goals by the end of the school year.
2. Standards in the infant classes were at an improved level in the 2004 teacher assessments, compared with those of 2003. This is summarised in the following table, which shows that standards in the teacher assessments last year were high in writing and well above average in reading and mathematics.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.0 (15.5)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.0 (14.6)	14.6 (14.6)

mathematics	16.8 (15.7)	16.2 (16.3)
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There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Because of parents' preferences for secondary education for their children, a significant proportion of higher attaining pupils leave the school before Year 6, mostly in Years 4 or 5. School records show that many pupils who transfer to other primary schools at this time are from the higher attaining group. This trend significantly affects standards, though the school does not allow it to impact on the achievement rate of those pupils remaining in school.
4. Over the past few years, there has been a different proportion of pupils with learning difficulties as part of their special educational needs in the Year 6 classes. This has also influenced the variation in results from year to year. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Good use is made of the local education authority support teacher to help to achieve this.
5. In Year 6 last year, standards, as shown in the next table, were average in mathematics and science and well above average in English. The results in mathematics dipped over those in 2003, though they were similar in the two years in science and at a higher level in 2004 in English. The school analysed the 2004 results very carefully and made significant modifications to provision in mathematics. This resulted in a positive outcome in that the current Year 6 pupils are on course to reach above average standards in mathematics. The same holds for standards in English and music. Currently, standards are average in Year 6 science and information and communication technology.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.4 (26.4)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	26.9 (28.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	28.7 (28.8)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 54 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. The pattern of standards and achievement in school was judged on the basis of an extensive examination of pupils' past work in all years. This showed that standards are broadly average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. However, the scrutiny of work showed that the presentation of pupils' written work, including handwriting, is in need of improvement and, accordingly, this is the next issue for the school to tackle in English and across the curriculum.
7. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are as successful in their learning as the other pupils and their achievement is good. The school also ensures that middle and higher attaining pupils achieve as well as those in lower groups. It is developing its provision for gifted and talented pupils soundly. The use of a very good range of strategies enables the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language to achieve as well as others. Support is used effectively to ensure that these pupils have learning experiences that allow them to be fully included in class and group activities. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls.
8. The accommodation is not well designed for the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. The open-plan nature of much space, coupled with the cramped conditions in some areas, result in noise pollution, the possibility of distraction by neighbouring activities and the curtailing of some experiences due to constraints of space. Generally, staff and pupils alike cope with the pressures of the accommodation with resilience and good nature. However, it is clear that the quality of education and the rate of achievement, especially in the development of speaking and listening skills, are affected by the unsatisfactory design and build of the accommodation.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their attitudes to learning are **very good**. School attendance is **good**. Punctuality is **satisfactory** overall but a number of pupils are regularly late for school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are enthusiastic learners, eager to take part in all the school offers; they are well behaved and polite.
- The schools ethos plays a major part in pupils' very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and the majority arrive in good time although a significant minority are regularly late.

Commentary

9. Pupils respond extremely positively to everything St Aidan's school offers. They work hard and behave well in lessons and around the school; enjoy the wide range of extra curricular activities, including a Samba Band which, as well as being noisy and great fun, develops teamwork and contributes to their musical education; they are very eager to learn. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are rare due to the high expectations of staff and a consistent approach towards rewarding the positive; pupils develop a clear sense of right and wrong, showing respect for others. Since the previous inspection there has been only one fixed term exclusion, which was for entirely justified reasons.
10. There are few incidents of racial disharmony or bullying. Parents and pupils have confidence that problems and concerns are dealt with. An ethos of caring for individuals ensures pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with special educational needs are fully integrated. The great majority of pupils with special educational needs show good attitudes to their work, are well motivated and behave well. The school works closely with the nearby Hope School for children with special education needs and a number of its pupils regularly attend classes at St Aidan's. On those days they wear the uniform of St Aidan's and are seamlessly included in lessons and activities.
11. Very good relationships contribute to a strong ethos of teamwork at all levels. The school provides an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to assume posts of responsibility making a good contribution to their personal development. A number of pupils are trained as play leaders, organising games and activities in the playground. Holders of these posts are excellent role models for the younger pupils. Members of the school council regularly discuss plans with younger pupils to ensure their views are taken into account. Pupils learn to play an active and responsible part in the life of the school, and the wider community, through regular fundraising for charity, often taking the initiative. For example one pupil wrote to the Headteacher requesting permission to hold a fundraising event for the recent Tsunami disaster but added that the school did not need to do anything as she had already organised everything including sufficient helpers.
12. Opportunities for pupils to reflect abound from circle time where pupils take turns to speak about their thoughts and feelings, to geography lessons where they experience the sights, sounds and tastes of India, developing not only their spiritual but also their multi cultural awareness. Careful consideration is given to broadening pupils' cultural experiences through creativity. This has resulted in a marked improvement in pupils' cultural awareness since the last inspection when it was described as satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
13. Attendance is good and above the national average, an improvement since the last inspection. New procedures and an emphasis on the importance of regular attendance have had a positive impact. The Headteacher personally telephones parents of absent children where there is cause for concern. Punctuality is satisfactory but a small group of pupils are regularly late and miss an important part of their lessons.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003/2004 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	4.4	School data:	0.1

National data:	5.1
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National data:	0.4
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The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning are of **good** quality. Assessment is **good** too.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much of the teaching and learning is of very good or better quality.
- There is consistency in the quality of teaching and learning through the school.
- Pupils respond enthusiastically and in a mature way and they build knowledge, skills and understanding at good rates.
- Shortcomings in the accommodation mean that the full development of all skills is curtailed.
- Assessment is of good quality and the opportunities for pupils to self-assess their work are good.
- Pupils of all attainment groups and needs are taught well, especially by the teaching assistants.
- The marking of pupils' work is not tied consistently to the targets set for individual pupils.
- Purposeful learning is evident; however, this is not always displayed in pupils' presentation and neatness of work.

Commentary

14. There is a positive picture of consistent teaching quality across the school. This impacts well on learning and achievement. As the following table shows, there was no unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection. This was confirmed by the examination of pupils' past work. On the other hand, there is much evidence in lessons and pupils' past work, of good quality teaching with many very good features. Overall, inspectors judge that teaching and learning at St Aidan's school are of good quality.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 68 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (4%)	23 (34%)	33 (49%)	9 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

15. It is immediately apparent on entering lessons that, generally, pupils go about their learning in an enthusiastic and mature way and this contributes to the effective building of knowledge, skills and understanding found across the school. Learning is focused, productive and purposeful due to teachers' good expectations, very effective encouragement given to pupils to work hard, very brisk pace to lessons and the very effective use of available time. Teachers are insistent that pupils behave and concentrate well and they ensure that pupils, regardless of background, have every opportunity to succeed.

16. Pupils from all attainment groups and backgrounds are taught well. The teaching assistants contribute effectively to this quality of provision, especially for pupils with special educational needs. Short-term planning ensures that pupils with special educational needs are provided with different tasks according to the stage they have reached. The use of targets from pupils' individual education plans as curriculum targets for literacy and numeracy helps teachers and pupils focus well on achieving them. The progress made by pupils in relation these targets is sometimes not recorded precisely enough, making it difficult to quantify the gains made. For example, *made progress* does not indicate whether the gains were sufficient. Teaching assistants have a significant input to the setting of targets in the individual education plans.
17. As indicated earlier in this report, the full development of all skills is curtailed by the unsatisfactory quality of the accommodation. Noise pollution and shortage of space are the two most serious outcomes of significant weaknesses in the design and build of the school. Teachers and pupils strive well to overcome the difficulties that arise from the inappropriate layout of the school. Nonetheless, the development of speaking and listening skills, for example, is restricted by the accommodation. The timetable has to be balanced very carefully to enable the teacher of one class to provide the necessary quiet learning conditions for the development of listening skills whilst the adjacent class is elsewhere in school, for example for a physical education lesson. Even when the timetable permits the provision of quiet and undisturbed learning, sounds from the opposite end of the area can be intrusive and distracting.
18. The quality of assessment is good. The data from assessment is used well in planning subsequent work and to track pupils' overall achievement as they progress through the school. Challenging targets for attainment in national tests are set by the school, and these are filtered to the pupils in the form of clearly stated learning objectives in lessons and individual targets for achievement term-by-term. The marking of pupils' work is not linked consistently enough to these targets. It is also evident that more effective targets could be set for achievement in written presentation and handwriting, as these qualities of pupils' work require more emphasis in lessons. Nonetheless, a significant strength of assessment is evident in the many opportunities provided for pupils to self-evaluate their work. This contributes substantially to the good achievement made, as pupils know well the pattern of their learning and the next steps they must take.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**. The accommodation is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum has improved significantly and is good.
- It is enriched very well by additional experiences and activities.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is effective.
- Some aspects of the buildings and site cause problems.

Commentary

19. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is well planned to provide the necessary experiences across the six areas of learning for children in the nursery and reception classes. The weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report have been improved well.
20. The curriculum for Years 1 to 6 is much better than it was at the time of the last inspection thanks to the very good leadership of the headteacher. Not only has she ensured that the weaknesses identified in the last report have been addressed successfully, but she has worked closely with the staff to make many positive

changes, which have increased the effectiveness of the curriculum. The restructuring of the timetable and the school day has increased the flexibility that teachers can use to provide suitable learning experiences. Teachers have been empowered to use their judgement when planning learning opportunities, for example, choosing to spend several hours to complete a unit of work in one go, rather than over several lessons. This has had a very helpful effect on teaching and learning in subjects such as art and design.

21. There is now an increased emphasis on creative experiences and making learning varied and enjoyable. The pupils' work displayed during the inspection reflected this well. Weeks are held in which a single theme is studied in every class. Recently, *Save Our Planet* was the idea around which a great variety of experiences, including many educational visits, were provided. As a result of the changes made, the curriculum now contributes well to pupils' achievements and to their personal development.
22. Very good enrichment of the range of learning experiences is evident in the wide range of extra opportunities available to pupils. A large number of after school clubs is run, including some for younger pupils. These include French, Spanish, dance, music and sports clubs. The many visits that are made and visitors to the school add greatly to the quality and relevance of the curriculum. Twenty-eight pupils in Year 4 are currently learning to play brass musical instruments, thanks to the school's involvement in a pilot project initiated by the local education authority. This additional learning helps to raise standards and promotes pupils' personal development well.
23. The school works hard to make sure that the curriculum is accessible to all pupils. The arrangements for helping pupils with special educational needs had a number of significant weaknesses at the time of the last inspection. These have been dealt with successfully. The targets on pupils' individual education plans are generally of good quality, with small steps closely defined. Sensible moves, such as making sure that pupils have only the targets set in their individual education plans to achieve, and are not burdened with others, have helped to improve the provision. Record keeping is now better, although the judgements made of the progress pupils make are sometimes not precise enough. The special educational needs coordinator, teachers and their assistants work very hard and effectively to provide effective support, resulting in these pupils making good progress.
24. The parts of the school building in which pupils in Years 3 to 6 are taught are poorly designed. The headteacher and governors have identified this, but the school does not have the resources to change the open plan design of the teaching areas. Consequently, despite the efforts made by staff to timetable activities carefully, the disturbance caused by practical lessons and the movement of pupils around this area of the school continue to interfere with the teaching and learning of adjacent classes. This has a detrimental effect on the progress that pupils make, especially in developing skills such as speaking and listening. Also, the small size of some classrooms restricts what teachers are able to provide.
25. The lack of a playing field results in the school using an adjacent grassed area open to the general public, and despite the care taken by staff, there remain some concerns about the health and safety of pupils. The accommodation is difficult to adapt to provide access for disabled persons. The governors have approved an accessibility plan, but work still needs to be undertaken, including providing a toilet suitable for disabled staff, pupils and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. The school provides **good** advice and guidance to pupils' and involves them well in the work of the school. Arrangements for induction into the nursery are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pastoral support system for all pupils, including child protection procedures, is good.
- The behaviour support system is good.
- Very good induction procedures are in place into the nursery and, subsequently, into school.
- Assessment to enable each pupil to receive support and guidance appropriate to their needs is good.
- There are no toilet facilities suitable for disabled access.

Commentary

26. Very good procedures are in place for monitoring Health and Safety. Regular assessments of risk are made both within school and on trips and residential visits. Any issues that arise are promptly dealt with. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well, for instance through the range of sporting activities available and encouragement to maintain a healthy diet. The school has made good progress in its forthcoming attempt to achieve a *Healthy School* award. Child Protection procedures are good.
27. The layout of the accommodation has implications for health and safety that the school are aware of and regularly review. For example, there is a lack of an appropriate designated area for the treatment of ill or injured pupils and toilet facilities suitable for disabled access; the school accessibility plan has yet to include these areas.
28. At the time of the last inspection there was no structured behaviour policy and the few disruptive pupils were not always well managed. There has been good improvement in this area. All staff, including lunchtime supervisors, are conversant with the clear system of sanctions and rewards, which emphasise the positive; the very few pupils that fail to conform to expectations are managed well.
29. Relationships in the school are very good and pupils are confident there is an adult they could talk to if they had a problem.
30. Induction procedures to the nursery class are very good. Home visits and good quality information for parents help pupils settle quickly into new routines and have a gradual entry into full time education. Regular garden parties are held where parents of children already established at the nursery chat and support parents of pupils who have just begun.
31. The tracking of pupils' academic progress as they move through the school is good. Pupils receive appropriate support from staff to help them improve. Each pupil has an individual target book for literacy and numeracy, reviewed with teachers and other pupils, reminding them what they have to do to improve and checking that their targets have been met.
32. The special educational needs coordinator's very good relationship and liaison with teachers in the Foundation Stage helps in the early identification of pupils with special educational needs. Her very good knowledge of individual pupils, gained from teaching all classes from nursery to 6, also helps in effectively supporting and guiding these pupils. Great care is taken by staff to ensure pupils with special educational needs are thoroughly integrated into their classes. As a result, most pupils do not know which of the other pupils have special educational needs.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, with the community, with other schools and institutions are all **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with the church, other schools, particularly Hope School, support pupils' development well.
- Transfer arrangements to secondary school are satisfactory.
- Support from parents is good; they have positive views of the school.
- There is good information for parents through newsletters and parents evenings; information about pupils' progress through annual progress reports is satisfactory.

Commentary

33. Good links with the local community help pupils to appreciate and develop the skills to enable them to become good citizens. In addition to supporting charities at home and abroad, a noteworthy link is the partnership with the nearby Hope School for children with special educational needs. Each week pupils from Year 6 attend the school to work with the pupils there, the schools challenge each other in sporting events such as hockey and a small number of pupils from Hope School attend lessons at St Aidan's where they are fully integrated into the school community. These wide ranging links are of excellent quality and mutual benefit to the community and the school, and contribute positively to pupils' learning and personal development.
34. Whilst links with the various secondary schools to which the majority of pupils transfer are satisfactory, liaison does not begin until the places allocated to pupils are known. The school acknowledges the need to develop this area to ensure a smooth transition from Year 6 enabling pupils to settle quickly into new routines.
35. Parents have very positive views of the school and many help regularly in class. They feel they have an effective partnership; some would like more information about their child's progress. The information parents receive through the written progress reports is satisfactory however, there are areas that the school recognises are ripe for improvement. Whilst clearly indicating what pupils have learned during the year, some do not indicate all the relevant targets set for them. The school is keen to use the annual written report as a means of encouraging parents to support their children's learning and senior staff are working towards this end.
36. The school forges an effective partnership with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Most parents attend the regular reviews of progress, though the suggestions made for parents to help their children are insufficiently detailed. However, the school has purchased a software package, which it is using to rectify this situation.
37. Helpful staff and friendly informative newsletters, sent on a regular basis, keep parents informed of day-to-day matters. Parents' feel comfortable approaching staff when there is a problem. The effectiveness of the partnerships between home and school and the positive support of the local community makes an effective contribution to supporting children's personal development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. Governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very good leadership with a clear vision for the school. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher.
- Subject leaders give good direction and manage their subjects well.
- Governors have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are both supportive and challenging.
- The work to ensure every pupil achieves well is very good and is a strength of the school.
- School self-evaluation and its use is very good.
- Financial planning is well managed. General administration is very good.

Commentary

38. The headteacher provides very good leadership, and is very well supported in this by the deputy headteacher. Colleagues are well motivated as a result, and this enables the school to develop and improve at a good pace. The clear vision for the school, together with high expectations provide good direction for the school's work. Good teaching overall ensures pupils achieve well. A clear desire and commitment to further improvement has successfully raised standards since the last inspection.
39. Underpinning the work of the school is the headteacher's clear sense of purpose and endeavour to sustain a broad and greatly enriched curriculum. There is a strong family ethos in the school. Pupils are treated equally as individuals, whatever their needs. The very good attention to educational inclusion, so that all pupils are valued and assisted to achieve well, is a strength of the school.
40. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are well informed about pupils' performance and budgetary detail and are proactive in evaluating and monitoring the work of the school, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The governors fulfil their statutory duties well and know and understand the principles of best value, challenging the decisions made by the headteacher and senior management. They are actively involved in the formulation and monitoring of the school improvement plan. Appropriate policies cover the school's position on all required areas such as racial equality and equal opportunities. All legal requirements are now met.
41. All staff work together as an effective team. Subject leaders give a good steer to their subjects and they manage them well. Their work is guided by a good school improvement plan, which provides a realistic working document for improving standards. The school's self-evaluation and its use are very good. Senior managers rigorously monitor teaching and curriculum development, and pupil performance is carefully tracked. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and action is taken to address any shortcomings. Some subject leaders monitor lessons, and an area for further development is to extend this to include subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
42. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school follows the recommended Code of Practice. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and regularly assessed. Such pupils are given good support, enabling them to achieve as well as their peers. Targets in pupils' individual education plans are regularly reviewed and adjusted as required.

43. Performance management is effectively contributing to improvement through well-targeted and relevant staff development. Day-to-day administration is very good. Financial planning is good with prudent management of the school budget, carefully linked to the school improvement plan. The school meets the needs of its pupils well and provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	949,475
Total expenditure	919,715
Expenditure per pupil	2,377

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	59,627
Balance carried forward to the next year	29,760

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation stage is **good**. Children are taught **well** and, as a result, achieve **well**. They settle in quickly and work from an interesting, curriculum. This is an improvement from the previous inspection, when provision was satisfactory.

Children enter the nursery with a wide range of skills, with many attaining below those expected for children of their age. Overall, the starting point is average. Teaching is good, and at times very good in the nursery and two reception classes and, therefore, children achieve well. Assessment arrangements are very good. This is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection. The results are used to plan activities that are well matched to children's learning needs. There is good support for children who have special educational needs and the children who are at an early stage of English acquisition. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is good. The leader is highly experienced and is guiding the team successfully in creating an integrated Foundation Stage.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because teaching and learning are focused on promoting children's confidence, independence and social skills.
- The teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to children's learning.

Commentary

44. Teaching is very good in nursery and reception classes and children make very good progress and achieve very well in developing their social skills. As a result, by the end of their time in reception, most will have attained their targets and a significant minority are on course to exceed these early learning goals.
45. Most children enter nursery with a wide range of social skills. Admission arrangements are very effective, with very good relationships between staff and parents. Nursery staff establish secure routines so that those who join at different times of the year feel safe and confident. This helps them settle easily. All the staff are very caring and use every opportunity to praise children's independence, develop their confidence and support any children who have special educational needs. Children are encouraged to take turns and to listen to each other. Children also have very good support from regular volunteers and student placements.
46. Reception staff encourage further independence and children respond very well to being helpers. Staff provide many opportunities for children to learn to co-operate through playing games. As a result, many children work successfully both alone and in small groups. The reception staff provide a stimulating curriculum in shared areas so that all children mix well. The separate building for nursery children prevents a fully integrated Foundation Stage department. However there are very good transition arrangements between nursery, reception and Year 1. Year 1 pupils are catered for

very well in the mixed reception and Year 1 class. There is good support for children who are early users of English, with time allocated daily for individual support.

47. All staff have high expectations of children's behaviour. When children do not do as expected they are dealt with firmly but fairly so that they learn how to appreciate the needs of other children. Children respond well to this and, as a result, their behaviour is good and their attitudes to school are very good. Nursery and reception children enjoy school and show real interest in what they are doing. They are eager to start the day and learn!

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because all staff take every opportunity to develop the children's language skills.
- Children with special learning needs and children who are at an early stage of English acquisition are well catered for and are fully included in all activities.
- A few children have difficulty expressing their ideas and recording their work.

Commentary

48. Children enter nursery with a wide range of communication skills. Teaching is very good in the nursery and reception classes. As a result, by the end of reception most are on course to achieve their early learning goals, with a significant number exceeding their targets. Staff work hard to develop children's confidence in speaking. In nursery, very good opportunities are provided for children to express their ideas through meaningful talk. Reception staff encourage less confident children to talk in sentences and more fluent communicators to extend their vocabulary. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution and are highly effective in helping to extend children's communication skills in very small groups and in the imaginative play areas.
49. Nursery and reception plan thoroughly together so that children's skills are built upon well. Nursery staff lay the foundations for establishing positive attitudes to reading through sharing attractive *big books*, familiar rhymes and traditional stories such as *The Ginger bread boy*. In an excellent reception lesson, children's early reading and writing skills were extended through letter and word games. The teacher shared a *big book* of *Jack and the beanstalk*. This was read in a lively and thoroughly engaging way. Great care was taken to fully include children from Hope School, with the class using sign language to welcome them to the lesson. Staff share books informally throughout the day. However, a few children need more encouragement to choose to look at books independently during choice times. Many opportunities are provided for children to write for a range of purposes. While every effort is taken to develop writing skills, a few children have difficulty forming their letters fluently or recording their work independently.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching and learning are focused on developing children's skills through a practical, interesting curriculum.

Commentary

50. Children enter nursery with a wide range of mathematical skills and many have limited experience in using and applying mathematical knowledge. Teaching is good overall, and at times very good. There is a focus on first hand practical activities based on attractive resources. Indications are that by the end of reception most are on course to attain, and a minority exceed, their early learning goals. In a well taught lesson the nursery teacher created a very special atmosphere where children joined in number rhymes, and counted buttons on gingerbread men with real enthusiasm. The support assistant and volunteers took every opportunity to reinforce and extend children's mathematical skills. A range of sand and larger mathematical equipment is in constant use so that children can explore, investigate and develop their mathematical language. Reception staff build on these practical experiences while encouraging children to record their work. Both teachers provide a good range of number games and activities. The contribution by the teaching assistants is very good in motivating the children to learn in very small group situations.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of good teaching, which is focused on developing children's skills through a practical, imaginative curriculum.
- Staff use questions very effectively to enhance children's understanding.

Commentary

51. There are a good range of activities for children to develop their senses and widen their understanding of the world. Good use is made of social and snack times to help children learn about healthy lifestyles. In both nursery and reception, children have many opportunities to develop their knowledge and curiosity about the world around them. A broad range of topics, visits and visitors help children to build up their picture of the world. The nursery has regular visits to the local community. Reception staff widen children's knowledge of different cultures by focusing on special times of the year such as Harvest, Chinese New Year and Christmas. There are good opportunities to learn about living things. However, there are no investigation areas for children to handle and explore living things informally, which the Foundation Stage leader is keen to rectify. Staff build up children's pleasure and confidence in using ICT by providing daily opportunities to use computers. Nursery and reception children also have regular specialist teaching in the ICT suite, where they use a range of interesting programs to develop their skills.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because there are plenty of opportunities to develop their physical skills.

Commentary

52. Teaching is good in the nursery and reception classes and children achieve well. The majority are on course to achieve their early learning goals in physical development, with a significant minority exceeding them by the time they leave reception. Nursery children have daily opportunities to use a wide range of equipment. The large outside area is very well equipped, which helps children develop their physical skills and confidence safely. Reception children have regular sessions in the hall and outside area to help them extend their physical skills and learn to respond to music. In a well taught lesson children squealed with delight as they learnt to use the outside space effectively to run, jump and improve their throwing skills whilst using bean bags. All children have access to tricycles and a range of small games equipment. Children develop their manipulative skills by handling dough, scissors and small toys. For some children their hand-eye co-ordination remains weak, which affects their capacity to hold and use pencils effectively.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because the staff provide an exciting and enjoyable curriculum.
- The Imaginative areas are used very well to extend children's creativity.

Commentary

53. Children enter nursery with a wide range of skills, with many having skills that are below expectation. Teaching is good in the nursery and reception classes and children achieve well. By the end of reception most are on course to attain, and many exceed, their early learning goals. There are many opportunities for children to develop their creativity and skills, for example making six-foot tall papier-mache dinosaurs! There is daily access to a good range of materials, with many planned opportunities to paint, draw and make models. All staff develop children's skills and creativity through a range of interesting topics such as the current topic on *Traditional Stories* linked to imaginative play experiences. Nursery staff extend children's creativity well through an attractive and spacious imaginative play area, currently *The Fairy Tale House*. Reception children showed real involvement as they played in a fabulous castle filled with fairy tale costumes. Care is taken to provide topics, costumes and resources that appeal to boys and girls. All children have many opportunities to sing rhymes and explore musical instruments informally. Very good use is made of the music room and the skills of the school's music teacher.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Pupils of different attainment levels achieve well as a result of good quality teaching.
- Very good relationships and attitudes to learning enable pupils to learn successfully.
- Independent learning skills and pupils' self-evaluation are well developed.
- Assessment is good and pupils' progress is monitored rigorously.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Marking is not linked closely enough to the target-setting process.
- The building is unsatisfactory. This affects the progress pupils make.

Commentary

54. Overall standards of English are above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The final standards are affected by the fact that a considerable number of pupils, higher attainers especially, leave school before they reach Year 6. However, staff are not complacent and they ensure those pupils remaining in school achieve well. Thus, reading standards are well above average at the end of Year 6. Speaking and listening skills are being developed well throughout the school, with well-planned opportunities included in all subjects, though weaknesses in the accommodation impact on progress. The school has successfully maintained its high standards since the last inspection. The school's careful tracking of individual performance over time shows that pupils of different attainment levels make good progress and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and work is appropriately marked. This enables them to achieve as well as their peers.
55. Throughout the school there are many good opportunities for pupils to develop speaking and listening skills across all subjects. Strategies such as role-play, hot-seating, debates and discussions feature regularly in teachers' planning. In Years 1 and 2 pupils speak confidently and endeavour to listen attentively, despite the difficulties presented by the unsatisfactory building. They respond enthusiastically to questions. These skills are built upon very effectively in Years 3 to 6 so that by the end of Year 6 pupils ask questions to extend their ideas, engage well in discussions, valuing each other's contributions and enjoy extended conversations, for example, in plenary sessions. They have a good command of English, having a good understanding of a wide range of more complex vocabulary.
56. By the end of Year 6 average and higher attaining pupils read with very good levels of fluency and expression. They read accurately, both fiction and non-fiction. Pupils are familiar with a wide range of texts and express their preferences for authors and styles well. They build very successfully on the good skills acquired in Year 2. Higher attainers read with very good expression and fluency. The higher attainers use dialogue and punctuation for effect and are beginning to use some of the higher skills such as inference. Lower attainers in Year 2 are more hesitant, but use their phonic knowledge to build unknown words. Many pupils in Year 2 are able to name their favourite author and talk about their reading habits. Most parents give good support at home for reading. Reading diaries are very well maintained with good contributions from parents and teachers. From Year 2 onwards, pupils take good responsibility maintaining book reports and reviews and reading journals and diaries. All are aware of their individual reading targets, which are reviewed regularly with their teachers.
57. Standards in writing are above average in Year 2 and Year 6. In Year 2, the writing of higher attaining pupils is organised, imaginative and clear with a good use of a range of punctuation such as speech marks and exclamation marks. Pupils use an

increasing range of descriptive language to make writing interesting, showing good awareness of the audience for their work. They use techniques such as the use of alliteration for effect, for example, *curly candyfloss*, *cold, fluffy candy floss*. Letters are accurately formed in most cases with higher attainers developing a neat cursive style. Writing skills are built upon effectively in Years 3 to 6, so that by the end of Year 6 pupils write for a wide range of audience. Higher attainers and average pupils use a good range of punctuation, accurately applied and work set out in paragraphs. Spelling is mostly accurate with plausible attempts at more complex vocabulary. Choice of vocabulary is more adventurous. Good links are made to other areas of the curriculum, for example, the strong links between art and written work, including poetry based around the blue planet aquarium. Writing includes examples of stories, poetry, play scripts, journalistic writing and instructional texts, as well as formal grammar.

58. Further development of extended writing is needed to encourage pupils to write at greater length in English and in other subjects. Presentation skills are not as good as they could be. A more consistent approach is required to develop neat, cursive handwriting and a pride in the appearance of work.
59. Teaching is good overall with very good teaching seen on occasions, particularly in a Year 2 class, resulting in accelerated learning for these pupils. Teachers provide good role models for pupils and value their contributions in lessons. They have good subject knowledge and through careful planning ensure pupils are well challenged. Teachers' high expectations, the very good relationships enjoyed, and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning enable all to learn successfully. Behaviour management is good throughout the school. In most classes, teaching assistants are effectively deployed and contribute well to pupils' learning. A real strength is the attention given by teachers to developing independent learning and self-evaluation skills. As a result, pupils have a good knowledge of their own learning and how to improve, using their initiative to progress. For example, they use dictionaries independently, have a *buddy* partner to share ideas and to support one another and they are well used to evaluating how well they have achieved the lesson's learning objectives.
60. Assessment of individual progress and attainment is good with rigorous monitoring and very good use of target setting. Marking is purposeful but is not linked closely enough to the target-setting process at present. The subject is very well led and managed by the advanced skills teacher. This has led to continuing developments and improving standards. Satisfactory use is made of ICT to support learning.
61. The unsatisfactory building hampers pupils' learning because space in classrooms is very limited and high noise levels resulting from the open plan arrangements make it difficult for pupils and teachers to be heard in lessons. This impacts on provision for the development of speaking and listening skills in particular.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Overall, good use is made of literacy skills to support work in other subjects. Skills in speaking and listening are used extensively across the curriculum through questioning, role-play and hot seating, discussions and group work, though the design of the accommodation does not make this straightforward. These opportunities are well planned for pupils in all lessons. The final parts of lessons, the *plenary* sessions, are used particularly well by many teachers to extend these skills. Pupils' capacity to research, retrieve and collate information from a range of sources is used well in

science, history and geography, for example. Writing skills are used effectively in most subjects, although there is room to develop extended writing and presentation skills further.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in mathematics and pupils' achievement is good.
- Mathematics is well taught and learning is of good quality.
- Leadership and management of mathematics are effective in promoting a good quality of education and consistent achievement.
- Pupils of all backgrounds achieve well.
- A significant proportion of higher attaining pupils leave the school before Year 6, which significantly affects standards in mathematics.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and this affects learning.
- The marking of pupils' work is not linked strongly or consistently enough to the individual targets set for pupils.

Commentary

63. Following the results of the 2004 mathematics national tests, which were considerably below the level found in English, the school analysed the outcomes thoroughly and made some significant changes to provision in order to ensure the current Year 6 pupils attain the highest standards possible. This has evidently been a successful move, as mathematics standards are currently above average in Year 6, rather than the average level found in 2004. The school's challenging targets for the year group are likely to be met in the forthcoming tests. This is doubly rewarding, as the prospect of good results illustrates well the school's determination to maintain the pupils' good achievement in mathematics despite the fact that a significant proportion of higher attaining pupils leave school before Year 6. Those who remain in school for their final years of primary education continue to make good gains in their mathematics learning.
64. Achievement is good, regardless of educational background of the pupils. Those with special educational needs are well supported in mathematics lessons, particularly by the teaching assistants, and this ensures that they make good progress. Likewise, pupils from higher attaining groups do well. The school's system of setting by attainment level for junior mathematics lessons is paying dividends. The work for the upper sets is well matched to needs and provides ample challenge. The pupils in the middle of the attainment range are well served by these arrangements too. Those pupils of just above average attainment in the upper sets are spurred to greater achievement by the challenge and success of the higher attaining pupils. In the lower set, those of just below average attainment set the trend for productive and purposeful learning and their needs are met well. The next step for the school is to ensure that the very few pupils at the very top of the attainment range consistently well provided for.
65. The quality of mathematics teaching is good. Teachers have good command of the subject, they plan interesting and challenging lessons and they have good expectations. The pace of lessons, insistence on good behaviour and hard work from the pupils, and the effective use of time are all considerable strengths. Homework is used well to support the development of skills and knowledge in mathematics. However, the marking of pupils' work is not related consistently to the mathematics targets set for pupils. The quality of learning is good despite

the unsatisfactory quality of the accommodation, which affects the development of some skills, such as collaborative working. In all, mathematics lessons are enjoyable, the pupils work productively and they build personal proficiency in the subject effectively.

66. The quality of leadership and management of mathematics are good. The subject leader has good influence in the improvement of the quality of provision and standards. There are good opportunities for the monitoring and evaluation of the strengths and areas for improvement in mathematics and this process is developing into a rigorous and effective programme of subject self-evaluation. There are very good aspirations and expectations for the improvement of mathematics and the whole staff work in tandem to realise their collective aims. The subject leader steers this work very effectively.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67. There is good use made of pupils' mathematical skills in other subjects and opportunities for them to polish and improve these skills are good. Teachers are adept at identifying opportunities for the development of mathematics in other subjects and there are some good examples of such work in science, design and technology and ICT. Registration periods are often used for the sharpening of mental mathematics, for example by solving problems related to attendance levels in class.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average for both seven and 11-year-olds.
- Achievement is good and improving throughout the school.
- Teaching is good and teaching assistants work well to support their pupils.
- Pupils collaborate very well when using their good investigation skills and their attitudes to learning are very good.
- Science is well led and managed.
- Procedures for assessment are good, though marking does not consistently inform pupils how to improve.

Commentary

68. When compared nationally, results have dipped and remained consistently low in recent years for pupils aged seven and eleven. Improvements in planning have enabled standards to improve gradually and skill development has been given the highest priority. Pupils' attitudes have benefited appreciably from the emphasis on exploration and investigation and, consequently, standards have improved. Boys and girls achieve equally well regardless of attainment level or background. Standards have now regained the levels as experienced in the previous inspection, with an appropriate number of pupils attaining standards above the national average in Years 2 and 6. All this is indicative of the good leadership and management in science. The subject leader has good expectations and brings determined and successful leadership to the subject.
69. Overall, science teaching is good, with some very good teaching and learning observed in Years 2, 5 and 6. Teachers are secure in their own subject knowledge

and plan meticulously for pupils of all attainment levels to succeed. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding, as well as in their capacity to tackle science investigations. In a very effective Year 2 lesson observed, pupils investigated and predicted the effect of forces on the movement of cars. Ramps were altered and pupils excitedly measured and recorded their results on a worksheet. By Year 6 pupils develop a set of personal recording skills. When investigating the effects of wires of varying length and thickness in circuits, they make more accurate predictions and are clear what constitutes a fair test. Pupils in Year 6 use scientific vocabulary accurately when discussing their previous investigations. They give examples of reversible and irreversible changes, describe how to separate solutions containing salts, and use the term *cells* instead of *batteries*.

70. There are very good links with other subjects. Pupils collaborate very well in groups and share their findings using good speaking and listening skills. ICT is used increasingly well to reinforce pupils' learning and the development of mathematical skills is evident when recording information in graphical form, as in the Year 4 lesson when measuring force in Newtons, and in the Year 2 lesson where higher attaining pupils measured in centimetres. The presentation of pupils' work is not always of the highest standard and a greater variety of writing styles could be used to record their experiences.
71. Assessment procedures have been improved significantly since the last inspection and data is used very well to match activities to the needs of all pupils. The next stage is to ensure that marking consistently informs pupils of their successes and suggests how they may improve. In addition, annual reports to parents do not inform them what their children should do to improve. Teaching assistants are managed extremely well and make a significant contribution to the good quality of teaching and learning. The good range of resources is used effectively and teachers work hard to minimise the effects of unsatisfactory accommodation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain average standards.
- Provision has improved greatly since the previous inspection.
- The subject leader works very effectively.
- Class teachers and the ICT leader share the responsibility for teaching the subject. The specialist teaching of ICT is of very good quality.
- There is good use of ICT in other subjects.

Commentary

72. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now average in Years 2 and 6. This represents very good improvement, since at that time the standards reached by pupils leaving the school were well below average. The weaknesses in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding noted in the previous inspection report are no longer evident. Pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. There is no evidence that boys and girls achieve differently.

73. The rise in standards is due to the improvements made in every aspect of provision. Planning, the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress and the accommodation are better. The quality of teaching and resources are much better. An ICT suite has been built and the machines are linked to the Internet through a broadband connection. A projector, linked to one of the computers, has been installed and other useful devices, such as a digital camera have been provided. A set of easily portable notebook computers is shared between the different classes. The flexibility provided by the use of these machines is very helpful in exploiting learning opportunities. The ratio of pupils to each computer is very much better than when the school was inspected previously.
74. Only lessons taught by the subject leader in the ICT suite were observed. The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall. An excellent environment for learning, stemming from very good relationships between the adults and the pupils, greatly enhances the progress that pupils make. Good subject knowledge, high expectations and the enthusiasm shown by the teacher and her assistants are also key factors. The pupils respond very well to the opportunities provided, displaying very good attitudes to learning, working hard and behaving well. All the classes from nursery to 6 are currently taught ICT skills by the leader, with the class teacher observing part of the lesson. Class teachers are responsible for using ICT to enhance learning in other subjects by building on the skills and knowledge developed in ICT lessons.
75. The very good leadership and management of the subject leader are one of the main reasons why ICT has improved so much. Leadership is especially well developed, with the leader acting as an excellent role model for colleagues and working very effectively to support them. The subject leader has shown great commitment to providing very effective training for members of staff and this is having a very positive effect on teachers' confidence and competence. She is currently putting the finishing touches to the school website.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. The use of ICT in other subjects is good. Examples of teachers developing pupils' computer skills were seen in a range of subjects. Teachers are also exploiting ICT well to increase knowledge and understanding in a number of subjects. For instance, in a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 5, a projector linked to a computer was employed well to help pupils learn multiplication facts.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is good.
- Standards match the national expectations.
- First hand experience contributes significantly to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Skill development is given a high priority, though handwriting and presentation could be improved.
- Achievement for all pupils is good.

- Although assessment procedures are secure, marking is not always used consistently well to guide improvement.

Commentary

77. Although no lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2, displays indicate that pupils receive a rich and varied curriculum. From an early age visits and visitors have added an exciting dimension to the quality of learning. The quality of display is a constant reminder of the quality of their learning as they compare and contrast the human and physical features of the fictional Island of Struay with their home environment.
78. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In lessons, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of places and landscapes. Learning moves on at good pace and a good range of strategies help to motivate pupils effectively. Relationships are impressive, with pupils benefiting from the value placed on their contributions. In the very good quality lessons observed in Year 6, pupils were encouraged to evaluate the quality of their work and to suggest improvement. All pupils achieved well, regardless of attainment level or gender.
79. First hand residential experience in the Lake District is adding relevance to pupils' learning in Year 6, increasing their appreciation of river development, the formation of mountains, and land use. A well planned curriculum, adapted from national guidelines, is promoting a greater understanding of similarities and differences of countries such as India, and is developing skills year on year. There are very good links with other areas of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy their lessons and collaborate well when researching information from texts or the Internet. They share information using good speaking and listening skills and use persuasive writing when suggesting improvements in the local community. Handwriting and the quality of presentation of work could be improved, however. The use of ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection. Although sound assessment procedures are now in place, marking does not always inform pupils how to improve.

HISTORY

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Historical enquiry is well developed.
- There are strong links with literacy and communication skills.
- Marking is not used consistently well to inform pupils how to improve.

Commentary

80. Provision for history has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The study of famous people such as Florence Nightingale, and events such as the Great Fire of London in Years 1 and 2, help pupils to develop an understanding of chronology. Well planned experiences guide them to explore the past from beyond their living memory. In their study of *toys*, grandparents help them to appreciate that

information can be gained not only through text, video and the Internet, but also by asking questions.

81. Overall, teaching in the lessons seen was good. Relationships are very good and pupils have the confidence to express themselves freely, knowing that teachers will value their contributions. The teaching assistants use a wide range of strategies to motivate their pupils. Where learning is most exciting, pupils enthusiastically carry out their tasks, as observed in the Year 3 simulated archaeological dig to identify Roman remains that followed their visit to Chester.
82. History contributes effectively to pupils' cultural development. In Years 3 to 6 pupils explore the legacies of invaders, whereas older pupils record their knowledge of past civilisations using professional presentation software as a means of sharing their findings with others. Their study of Ancient Greece has given them a good understanding of democracy and Olympic ideals. Good planning ensures that skills are acquired systematically year on year. Historical enquiry is particularly well promoted, with literacy skills being well developed, apart from the quality of presentation and handwriting. Research skills, developed through text, the Internet and first hand experience are given the highest priority.
83. Teaching assistants are managed very well and make a significant contribution to the quality of learning, especially for pupils with special educational needs, who achieve as well as others. Assessment procedures are now effective, but marking is not always used to show pupils how to improve.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good** and contributes much to pupils' creativity.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- Art and design is a well-taught subject.
- Pupils' creativity is developed well.

Commentary

84. In art and design the wide range of work seen indicates that standards are above expectations by the end of Years 2 and 6, with pupils achieving well. Pupils have regular opportunities to draw, paint, print, use a range of textiles and produce three-dimensional objects. Sketchbooks are used well to develop pupils' drawing skills. A real strength is the care taken to develop pupils' skills and individual creativity.
85. There are many opportunities for pupils to use their art and design skills within other subjects such as English, geography, history and science. For example Year 2 pupils' vibrant and exciting acrylic full-wall *Fantasy Island* painting was used to stimulate pupils' creative writing. The school shows pupils that their work is highly valued by the excellent level of display and presentation, which is apparent from the moment the visitor enters the school. For example, unique ceramic sea creatures, six-foot dinosaurs in the library and hanging chairs create a very attractive learning environment.

86. The quality of teaching is good. Most lessons observed were well taught, with pupils working confidently and displaying care and interest in their work. In a very well taught Year 5 lesson, teaching was characterised by very lively teaching, high expectations and excellent resources. Both girls and boys were highly motivated and produced imaginative prints inspired by the work of William Morris. In the occasional lesson pupils have less opportunity to express their own creativity, for example whilst weaving, because they are over directed.
87. Art and design makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development. Pupils study a wide range of artists from around the world. A very strong feature is the link with *Drumcoon Visual Arts Centre*. Pupils in Years 2 and 5 have visited the centre, worked with artists in school, and produced work that is imaginative, original and of a high standard.
88. Art and design is well led and managed. The subject leader is hard working and is successful in bringing improvement and giving clear direction to the subject.

Design and technology

89. In design and technology, due to timetable arrangements only one lesson was observed. This Year 2 lesson was excellently taught, with children achieving highly in their skills development. This was because the teacher, together with the support assistant and parent volunteer, fully encouraged pupils' creativity whilst making puppets, providing excellent resources. The limited samples of work seen suggest that pupils attain average standards throughout the school.
90. Evidence supplied by the school shows that the school covers the agreed syllabus. The weaknesses related to assessment, identified at the time of the previous inspection, have been addressed well. Pupils' skills are systematically built upon. Useful guidelines help pupils to plan, design, modify and evaluate their work. Effective use is made of ICT programs to support learning in design and technology.
91. From the evidence supplied, pupils are encouraged to be creative and take care with what they make. Pupils have good opportunities to use their drawing, writing and mathematical skills whilst extending their design and technology skills. Staff work hard to overcome the constraints of lack of space to display or store work in progress by blocking sessions at different times for each year group.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision in music has been improved very well since the 1999 inspection.
- Standards are above average and achievement is very good.
- Music is very well taught, and led and managed, by the talented specialist teacher.
- Pupils' creativity and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development all benefit from their work in music.

Commentary

92. The 1999 inspection report identified a number of weaknesses in the provision made for music. Since then, the school has made very good improvement and standards are above average because pupils achieve very well, and consistently, from their starting point in Year 1.
93. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The system of specialist teaching of music is an asset. The music teacher enthuses the pupils most successfully so that they enjoy their music lessons. Boys are as likely to enjoy music as the girls. The skilful choice by the teacher of music to perform and sing gives *street-cred* to the work, and results in good determination to learn. Pupils have ample opportunities to evaluate the music they hear and perform. Indeed, this aspect of the work is a particular strength, giving good insights into different types of music, such as examples from different generations during the twentieth century, which were enthusiastically studied and analysed by the Year 6 pupils in a high quality lesson observed during the inspection.
94. Music is very well led and managed. The specialist teacher involves other staff very effectively in the music lessons for their class. They are present for most of the session and take note of specific experiences so that they can build on these back in class. Music lessons make a strong contribution to pupils' creativity and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is also apparent that pupils' personal and social education benefits from the work in music.
95. Music provision and standards are clearly a strength of the school. There is very good determination to maintain the strengths and to improve in areas of need. Parents identify music as one of the school's many talents. They are not wrong in this evaluation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

96. There is too little evidence to reliably judge standards and achievement. However, records held by the school indicate that good standards in swimming have been maintained since the last inspection. The dance seen in Year 3 and the gymnastics observed in Year 5 were of a satisfactory standard.
97. The evidence is limited, since two of the three lessons seen were in Year 3, but teaching and learning appear at least satisfactory. Good links made with history in the dance lessons increased pupils' interest. Good expectations and insistence on good standards of behaviour made the gymnastics lesson successful. However, not enough gymnastics mats were available and this reduced the progress pupils made.
98. The monitoring role of the subject leader is well developed. Planning, standards, and teaching are checked and discussions held with pupils to seek their views. The lack of assessment procedures noted in the previous report has been corrected and teachers now use demonstrations consistently well. Documentary and photographic evidence show that a rich curriculum is provided, and dance lessons make a good contribution to increasing pupils' awareness and appreciation of other cultures. Involvement in *The School Sports Co-ordinator Partnerships Scheme*, and liaison with local schools and sports clubs have a positive effect on provision.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff have worked hard to have St Aidan's recognised officially as a *Health Promoting School* and this accreditation is likely to be awarded later this year.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and sometimes very good.

Commentary

99. The school makes good use of the *Here I am* programme to boost this aspect of its work and to emphasise its Catholic character. Elements that the school is required to teach – sex and relationships education and raising awareness of the dangers of drugs, tobacco and alcohol – are covered well.
100. The strong emphasis on pupils leading a healthy lifestyle has a very positive effect on their personal development and the ethos of the school. Physical education activities, such as the *Happy Healthy Bounce Day* event make a good contribution to this provision.
101. The teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, despite the limitations of the accommodation. They act as very good role models in lessons because they relate very well to the pupils.
102. The result of the good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship is to be found in the very friendly, welcoming and caring pupils. The school meets well its prime objective to *encourage each other to develop our abilities to the full* and it demonstrates clearly that the individual needs of pupils, whether academic or personal, are met. The Christian values underpinning the school's Mission Statement are at the root of the very good ethos that is found throughout the building. The pupils are a significant strength of the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3

How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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