

# INSPECTION REPORT

**St Ambrose Catholic Primary School**

Stockport

LEA area: Stockport

Unique reference number: 106115

Headteacher: Mrs H Hilton

Lead inspector: Mr F P Ravey

Dates of inspection: 3 – 5 May 2005

**Fourth Draft**

Inspection number: 267724

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:	143
School address:	Rostrevor Road Adswood Stockport Cheshire
Postcode:	SK3 8LQ
Telephone number:	0161 480 8466
Fax number:	0161 476 8466
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr James Seggie
Date of previous inspection:	21 June 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Ambrose Catholic Primary School has fewer pupils on roll than most schools nationally. The number of pupils attending has dropped considerably in recent years, reflecting a fall in birth rates locally. As a result of the drop in numbers, pupils in Years 3 to 6, are taught in classes that have two age groups. The number of classes from Year 1 to Year 6 has dropped from seven to five since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is higher than in most schools nationally. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Pupils' attainment on entry to the reception year varies considerably but is below average overall.

In recent years the school has experienced a large number of changes to its teaching staff and at present three out of its six classes are being taught by temporary teachers. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are recent appointments although both held these positions previously in an acting capacity. The school's senior management team is newly formed.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11371	Mr F Ravey	Lead inspector	English, Information and communication technology (ICT), special educational needs. English as an additional language
9798	Mrs V Ashworth	Lay inspector	None
33544	Mrs G Burrows	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, Science, Citizenship, Geography, History
18790	Mr G Morgans	Team inspector	Mathematics, Art and design, Design and Technology (D&T), Music, Physical Education

The inspection contractor was:

Focus Education (UK) Ltd  
113 – 115 High Street  
Uppermill  
Saddleworth  
OL3 6BD

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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>15</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS</b>	<b>18</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>30</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**School effectiveness is satisfactory.** The achievement of pupils is satisfactory and their behaviour is good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The new leadership team is providing satisfactory leadership and management. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is good and this leads to children achieving well.
- Pupils achieve well in reading in Years 1 to 6 but standards are below average in writing, science and information for communication technology (ICT) in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, enabling these pupils to achieve well but higher attaining pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not achieve as well as they could.
- Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and the development of their personal qualities are good and the school takes good care of its pupils.
- Assessment information about pupils' performance is not used sufficiently well to help them improve their work.
- The governing body is firmly committed to improving the school's performance but the lack of rigorous systems for monitoring it hinders them and senior managers from keeping a sufficiently close check on it.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.

Whilst standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are higher than at the time of the last inspection, the school has not been successful in addressing some of the key issues raised at that time. As a result, improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Insufficient improvement has been made in raising standards in science, in improving the provision for ICT, in using assessment information in planning and in the marking of pupils' work. However, satisfactory improvement has been made in addressing the issue relating to unsatisfactory teaching. Standards in science are now rising and provision in ICT, though still unsatisfactory, is on the threshold of improvement.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.** In the Foundation Stage, children achieve well in all areas of learning but still start Year 1 with below average attainment in key areas of their learning. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics and standards meet the national expectation in these subjects by the end of Year 2. Achievement in writing and science is satisfactory overall but weaknesses in the achievement of higher attaining pupils in particular results in standards in writing and science being below the national expectation at the end of Year 2. A similar pattern occurs in Years 3 to 6, with achievement in reading and mathematics being good overall whilst in science and writing achievement is only satisfactory and not good enough to raise standards to the nationally expected levels. In Year 6, standards in reading mathematics are at, and standards in English and science are below, the nationally expected levels. The weakness in achievement of higher attaining pupils remains an issue throughout Years 1 to 6. This weakness is reflected in the mostly lower than average recent national test results, shown in the table above.

Standards in ICT are below the national expectation in Year 2 and Year 6 owing to poor provision of resources.. Pupils with special educational needs and those at the early stages of learning English as an additional language achieve well. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as others of similar attainment. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development are good.** Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils show good attitudes to school and they behave well in lessons and in other settings around the school. Attendance is well below the national average despite the school's efforts to improve it. Punctuality is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall** but in the Foundation Stage they are good because of the very well planned, well taught curriculum for that age group that encourages children to be active and creative learners. In Years 1 to 6, teaching is effective when all groups of pupils are provided with challenging learning tasks but is only satisfactory when the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils is insufficient. This results in the quality of learning for these pupils being less than it should be. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of well planned learning tasks and good support from teaching assistants. The school has a satisfactory range of assessment procedures but as yet is not making best use of them to help raise standards. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. The school provides good care for its pupils, very much in keeping with its mission statement. It provides satisfactory guidance and support overall and maintains satisfactory partnerships with parents, other schools and the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are satisfactory.** Governance is good although in two small respect governors do not comply with statutory requirements. The school has a newly formed leadership team following a period of considerable changes to teaching staff. The headteacher and key staff have a clear vision for the school's success and are beginning to put into place the systems required to manage the school effectively so that their vision is realised. The green shoots of recovery from recently low standards are evident in the initiatives for improvement now being implemented. However, systems for checking school performance are not strong enough to aid improvement.

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

Parents very largely have positive views of the school. Most express satisfaction with all aspects of its work although a small number are dissatisfied about aspects of communication with the school. Inspectors found that the school's communication with parents is satisfactory. Pupils also express positive views about the school.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- raise standards in writing, science and ICT at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and improve provision in ICT to at least a satisfactory level;
- improve the achievement of higher attaining pupils in Years 1 to 6;
- make better use of the information about standards and pupils' progress in order to improve achievement and raise standards;
- establish rigorous systems for monitoring school performance and from this take effective action to raise standards;
- improve attendance.  
and, to meet statutory requirements:
- provide all the required information in the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents.

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

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve **well**. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 6 is **satisfactory** overall. Standards are **below the national expectation** overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well because of good teaching and very good planning.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well in reading.
- Standards in writing, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are below the national expectation in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Higher attaining pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.0 (15.2)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	11.8 (11.7)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	14.9 (16.7)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 20 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.9 (25.8)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	26.5 (26.4)	27.0 (26.8)
science	26.5 (26.8)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 22 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

**As year groups have become smaller in recent years, care must be taken in interpreting national test results as these can provide a distorted picture as to how the school compares with other schools nationally.**

1. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 have dropped over the last two years following a general trend of improvement from 2000. This has resulted in the school's trend for improvement being below the national trend. The most significant fall has been in writing, which the school recognises as a priority for improvement. However, the school's action plan for improvement is starting to take effect and standards, although still below the national expectation, have improved from the level below average level indicated by last year's test results. Standards in reading and mathematics have also risen this year and are judged to be at the national expectation.
2. Standards at Year 6 have risen at a rate above the national trend in recent years although they have fallen back a little in the last two years. Standards in mathematics as measured by national test results have improved steadily and consistently over the past five years. Those in English have begun to rise again but in science standards in the tests have continued to fall. In reading and mathematics, standards are at the national expectation, but



in writing and science they are below. Improvement is evident in standards attained in science this year because of better teaching of scientific skills.

3. There are several reasons for the picture presented on standards.
  - In reading, a strong focus on learning the basic skills, good support for reading in school and at home and good teaching of the more advanced reading skills mean that all groups of pupils are given good opportunities to succeed and are well motivated to learn. This leads to good achievement.
  - In mathematics, achievement is generally good because teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and teach basis skills well.
  - In writing and science in particular, and occasionally in mathematics, the school's lack of success with higher attaining pupils means that these pupils do not achieve as well as they should. It also means that the school's performance in national tests is not as good as it could be. Higher attaining pupils often do not receive sufficient challenge in their work. They are not provided with challenging enough individual targets for learning, and teachers' marking of their work does not provide them with the information and challenge that would help take their learning further.
  - In ICT, pupils of all levels of attainment are restricted in their achievements by the lack of enough modern personal computers (PCs) and by the lack of a suitable room in which pupils can learn and practise skills. However, the opening in September 2005 of a new computer room with sufficient modern PCs has the potential to help teachers address this problem.
4. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well because they are provided with very well planned, good quality learning experiences that encourage them to think and to learn through practical activity. Teaching encourages this 'hands on' approach to learning. Very good team work between the teacher and support staff means that pupils are given very good support so that they make the most of their learning opportunities.
5. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school. This is due to a combination of good planning and good use of teaching assistants to support and challenge these pupils. Teaching assistants are very much at the heart of the school's success with these pupils. Similarly, the few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language achieve well because of a well-structured programme of learning and support. The few pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other pupils of similar levels of capability.
6. The school did not achieve its targets for attainment in English and mathematics for Year 6 pupils in 2004 but it was considerably more successful in predicting attainment in mathematics than in English. However, this year's somewhat lower targets in these subjects are more realistic and look more likely to be achieved.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' attitudes to school and to each other are good.
- Behaviour is good throughout the school.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good.
- Punctuality is good but despite the school's best efforts, attendance is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	0.8
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.  
Data for small groups of pupils should be interpreted with caution.*

7. The school makes it clear that good attendance is important and there are sound procedures in place to encourage this. However, a few parents do not accept that regular attendance is necessary. In addition a very small number of pupils have great difficulty in attending despite the school's best efforts to encourage them. There are good relationships with the local authority attendance agency, whose officer visits the school and a few families regularly. Some parents take holidays in term time and days off for domestic reasons and this also adversely affects attendance. The large majority of pupils arrive at school on time although a very small number are late on a regular basis.
8. Pupils' good attitudes to school and to their work contribute very positively to the warm, harmonious and friendly ethos within the school, as well as to their personal development. The good relationships between pupils and staff also contribute strongly to the school's ethos. Pupils like their school very much and enjoy the sense of belonging that it gives to them. This very positive attitude towards the school develops from the moment the children enter the nursery. Personal and social development are good throughout the Foundation Stage.
9. Behaviour in class and around the school is good, with staff managing any problems well. The school has a comprehensive behaviour policy that is very clear and uniformly applied by all members of staff. Rules are displayed in each classroom and are frequently drawn to the pupils' attention through a variety of activities, such as circle time. Pupils who behave well are rewarded with 'Golden Time', an opportunity to undertake tasks they enjoy doing. Good behaviour is also identified and celebrated in 'praise assemblies'. These assemblies value both achievement and effort and successfully help to raise pupils' aspirations and to enhance self-esteem. In lessons, when pupils are asked to work together in pairs or groups they co-operate well, taking turns fairly and listening to one another's ideas. There have been no exclusions.
10. Pupils are successfully encouraged to reflect on a wide range of issues during assemblies, in circle time and at other times of the school day. Older pupils show care and consideration for the younger ones, particularly in their roles as 'playground friends' which they take very seriously. Instances of bullying are extremely rare and pupils feel that this issue is always dealt with appropriately by adults. Pupils also have the opportunity to become members of the school council. This group of pupils has been responsible for organising several successful charity fund raising events. Pupils have a very clear idea of the difference between right and wrong, and thrive on the encouragement and praise they receive. They are polite, friendly and well mannered when talking to adults, they listen attentively in lessons, answer questions eagerly and respect the feelings and views of others. In their cultural development they are beginning to appreciate their own culture and those of others. The school is very committed to its Catholic ethos and this is reflected in the close relationship it has with the local parish church. Most parents agree that behaviour is good and that the school develops their children's personal qualities well.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a **satisfactory** quality of education overall. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall. The curriculum is **satisfactory** overall. The school takes **good** care of its pupils. It maintains a **satisfactory** partnership with parents, other schools and the community.

## Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall although teaching is **good** in the Foundation Stage. Assessment is **unsatisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in the Foundation Stage enables children to achieve well.
- Teachers form good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well, leading to a good climate for learning in most lessons.
- Higher attaining pupils in Years 1 to 6 are not provided with sufficient challenge and do not achieve as well as they should.
- Pupils with special educational needs are provided with good support for their learning and so they achieve well.
- The effectiveness of teaching in ICT is limited by inadequate accommodation and resources.
- Assessment information is not used effectively in Years 1 to 6 to help teachers raise standards.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 28 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1	13	13	1	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

11. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is good. Occasionally it is very good. Teachers and support staff work very well together as a team. This leads to effective teaching that ensures children achieve well in all areas of learning. Staff pass on their caring attitudes to children by example. Effective use is made of praise to boost children's confidence and to motivate them to learn well. Children respond well to all this. Learning is active and enjoyable.
12. The strong emphasis placed on personal and social development for children in the nursery year means that they achieve well and most start in the reception class already having attained the standards expected for their age in this area of learning. Great emphasis is placed on the importance of speaking and listening. Thorough and careful planning of this aspect of the curriculum ensures that children have a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and hence they achieve well.
13. Planning in the Foundation Stage is detailed and thorough in all areas of learning. This allows teachers and support staff to provide children with good quality learning experiences right through from the start of the nursery year to the end of reception. Support staff play a very important role in children's learning. They are very effective in translating plans into good practice. The skills of independent learning are developed effectively. Children in the reception class are given good opportunities to practise their skills through homework. Satisfactory assessment is carried out to ensure children progress appropriately to the next stages of learning.
14. In Years 1 to 6, teaching is mostly satisfactory; sometimes it is good and very occasionally it is unsatisfactory. Teaching in these year groups has some important strengths but also some weaknesses. Teachers and support staff form good relationships with pupils. As a

result, pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and they behave well. When encouraged to work together as 'learning partners' in order to exchange ideas or discuss an issue, pupils react sensibly and good learning takes place.

15. Whilst many pupils' achievement in lessons is at least satisfactory, higher attaining pupils do not achieve satisfactorily over time. This is because the work that they are given often fails to provide the element of challenge that they need in order to extend their learning and reach the standards of which they are capable. Teachers' planning sometimes results in most pupils in the class receiving the same learning task. Often this task is suited to the middle range of attainment. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs receive additional adult support in order to help them learn successfully. Teaching assistants work particularly effectively with lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.
16. Conversely, pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they receive the right mix of challenge and support. Their individual targets for learning are well matched to their learning needs. The school's system of putting teaching assistants at the heart of recording the progress made by pupils with special educational needs is a significant factor in its success in helping these pupils do well. Teaching assistants are very familiar with what pupils know, can do and understand and as a result they give teachers the information that enables the next steps in learning to be planned. In the Foundation Stage, children with special educational needs are also taught well. As a result of the good assessment in the nursery class, groups of children work on a regular basis with a support worker who teaches a programme designed to specifically develop language and communication skills. This good work also impacts positively upon the achievement of lower attaining pupils, some of whom have special educational needs, whilst others often work in groupings that benefit from special needs' support. This focus on lower achieving pupils and those with special educational needs has been a recent school initiative and an effective one. The very few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language receive a good programme of support and also achieve well.
17. The effectiveness of teaching in ICT is limited by there being too few modern computers. Some of the computers in use in classrooms are of poor quality and are unreliable. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
18. Insufficient use is made of assessment data to check the progress of individuals. Pupils other than those with special educational needs are not identified for additional support. There are no effective procedures in place to monitor progress on regular basis and pupils are not challenged to achieve their best. There is some analysis of standardised tests, but even this information is not used well enough to identify areas for development. Whilst individual developmental targets have recently been set for pupils in mathematics and English these are not yet used effectively and consequently pupils are unable to evaluate effectively how well they are doing with their work. The quality of marking varies considerably across the school and often does not help pupils to gain a better understanding of what needs to be done to help them improve.

## **The curriculum**

The breadth of curricular opportunity provided by the school is **satisfactory**. There are **satisfactory** opportunities for enrichment. The accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The breadth of curricular opportunities and accommodation and resources overall in the Foundation Stage are good.
- Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching assistants make a strong and positive contribution to teaching and learning.
- Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.

- Support for learning outside the school day is good.
- In Years 1 to 6, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through educational visits.

## Commentary

19. All six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage are very well planned and effectively taught. Children in nursery and reception are supported well by the qualified and other teaching assistants. Teaching assistants in Years 1 to 6 are also used effectively. They particularly support pupils with special educational needs well, ensuring that they make good progress in their learning. The school has a largely effective approach to ensuring that all pupils have a fair chance to benefit from the education they receive and this is apparent in procedures for early identification of special educational needs, including those of nursery children. Provision for these pupils is good with clear individual education plans, which focus on effectively implemented small steps for success. However, the work planned for higher attaining pupils does not stretch them sufficiently.
20. Provision in ICT is unsatisfactory in Years 1 to 6. Pupils' achievement is limited because of the limited range of hardware and software available although the school's recent purchases of sufficient modern computers and good quality software, and their plans to use them, indicate good potential for improvement.
21. Support for learning outside the school day is good. The school runs a breakfast club (organised by a teaching assistant) and after school provision, which is currently being taken over by an outside provider. Out of school hours funding is used effectively to pay for specialist provision to lead after school clubs. Violin, guitar and keyboard opportunities are offered from this funding as extra curricular activities to pupils in Year 3 to 6, along with a dance club and boys' break dancing. Boys in the break dancing club have taken part in a performance at a large theatre and the dance group are to be involved at the Manchester Youth Games. Members of staff also lead a small choir and a drama group. These activities have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school.
22. Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements there are too few opportunities planned to extend pupils' learning through educational visits. Except for geography work in the locality, the only educational visit in Years 1 to 6 this year has been as part of a topic on the Tudors. This visit helped the pupils understand clearly what life in Tudor England was like and they were filled with excitement and enthusiasm about their learning.

## Care, guidance and support

The school takes **good** care of its pupils. Overall, it provides **satisfactory** support and advice for them. It takes **satisfactory** account of pupils' views.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good care of pupils is evident throughout the school.
- Relationships are good between all staff and pupils
- Pupils with special educational needs are provided with good support and guidance are well supported
- Systems for monitoring pupils' academic progress are not sufficiently thorough.
- Procedures for welcoming children into school are good.

## Commentary

23. A combination of good relationships, sound procedures and a range of useful initiatives result in good care for pupils. This begins in the Foundation Stage and continues right through to Year 6. It contributes significantly to the school's ethos. Routines for dealing with accidents, safety in the building and on outside visits are well established although incidents are not always recorded. Two members of staff are fully trained in first aid. Sound child protection procedures are in place. The head teacher is the designated person responsible for child protection and has received recent training. Part of this training included all members of staff and three governors. Last year the school became involved in the healthy schools initiative. Only healthy eating is allowed at break times and pupils are encouraged to drink water in class. Before and after school care is well established. The breakfast club has some positive impact on attendance and punctuality.
24. Pupils feel that they can consult teachers and other members of staff when faced with a problem, secure in the knowledge that help will be available to them. Pupils are well cared for at lunchtime and kitchen staff provide healthy choices of food. Lunchtime supervision is effective, with staff working hard to ensure that lunchtime is enjoyable, organising and participating in a variety of games on the school field. The headteacher is frequently present over the lunchtime period and this helps to reinforce the quality of care for pupils.
25. The pupils feel that school is a happy place. The use of teaching assistants to support pastoral care is good throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of special educational needs, benefit from good care and guidance. Outside support agencies work alongside the school when pupils have particular problems. The nurse visits school on a regular basis and supports the sex education and drugs programme. The school formally consults pupils through a school council, which allows pupils to have their views taken into account. Pupil questionnaires have also been analysed. Pupils know they are listened to and that their comments are valued because they are given reasons if their views are not acted upon. Some children in Year 6 take on the role of secretary at lunchtimes, answering the telephone and taking messages. Taking on such additional responsibility increases their self-esteem.
26. At present there is not a thorough system of monitoring pupil's academic progress to ensure all pupils make the best possible progress. Whilst there are very good systems for monitoring the progress of children with special educational needs, higher attaining pupils are frequently unchallenged in lessons and their achievement is therefore limited. The school is aware of this and examining ways of addressing the problem.
27. Children entering the Foundation Stage settle well into new routines and staff work hard and very effectively to make them feel safe and happy. Good care is taken of those who join the school, whatever their age and stage of learning.

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

The school's partnership with parents, the community and other schools is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most parents have a high regard for the school.
- Pupil reports need further development.

### **Commentary**

28. Those parents who attended the parents' meeting, wrote letters, or returned the questionnaire, indicated that they were very happy with the school's provision although some parents at the meeting felt that staff changes had had a detrimental effect. A few parents feel that they are not kept well informed about how their child is getting on but the large majority feel that their children are making good progress. They consider their children

to be happy and well cared for. They feel comfortable about approaching school and agree that staff are quick to respond if there is a problem.

29. The quality of information given to parents is generally satisfactory. The school is aware that the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents do not fully meet requirements but immediate steps are being taken to correct this. Workshops to help parents support their children's learning in different subjects are held each term and there are two open days, a science morning and an afternoon for mathematics, when parents can come to look at their children's work. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There are also regular newsletters and appropriate letters home. Annual reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory overall although they do not contain enough information on individual targets and areas for development. There are two formal parents' evenings, which are well attended, and parents know they can come into school at any time to seek further information.
30. The school seeks and values parents' views. The school is working hard to increase parents' involvement in school. A few parents do volunteer to help and events such as school Masses and class assemblies are well supported. Although the Friends of St. Ambrose is a small group, it raises a substantial amount of money from parents and the community for the benefit of the school. It also publishes its own newsletters through which it keeps all parents effectively informed about its work.
31. Most pupils transfer to the school's partner Catholic high school. Transition arrangements are well established and satisfactory. The school is also involved effectively in the Catholic schools' cluster and the local area group of schools to share good practice. Stockport schools hold a joint annual carol service in the local Church of England church and pupils also mix with other schools in organised dance activities. There are good relationships with the church, and the parish priest is a member of the governing body. There are productive links with the town football club which also runs a holiday football club on site. Other useful links include a local community project. Other visitors to the school promote healthy lifestyles as in sport, health and safety or the curriculum generally. There is also a link with Stockport College of Further Education whereby students training to work with young children gain experience in school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The new leadership team has made a good start to improving the school.
- Staff and governors are clear about the school's future direction.
- Systems for evaluating performance and quality of education are insufficiently developed.
- The management of special educational needs is good.
- The Governing Body is effective, well informed and takes an active role in monitoring the work of the school.

## **Commentary**

32. The school's leadership team has been formed very recently after a period in which senior management posts were held on a temporary basis. The following actions demonstrate the early impact of its work.
- The leadership team has established a clear, shared vision for the school.
  - It has identified as a priority the need to put the school's staffing on a more stable basis, one that will allow a more realistic sharing of managerial duties. The governing body has advertised for teachers to join the school's established staff and this process should be complete before the start of the new school year.
  - A high quality strategic plan is being implemented to improve provision in ICT.
  - The school's main areas of weakness have been identified accurately and action plans are being implemented to help raise standards in writing and science.
  - An initiative to focus upon improving the standards and achievement of lower attainers is proving successful, especially in English.
33. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, namely that the school does its best for each child so that each can fulfil their potential. Discussions with other members of the leadership team reveal that this vision is strongly shared by all. It is sharply focused on the acknowledged need to raise standards and to develop a more creative and flexible approach to pupils' learning. The school's positive and supportive ethos finds a reflection in the newly formed staff team. The partnership between teachers and teaching assistants works effectively in lessons and temporary teachers work as hard as anyone to build a sense of belonging and purpose.
34. Subject leadership is undertaken enthusiastically but sometimes lacks that rigorousness of approach needed to drive improvement. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for evaluating the school's performance in its various areas of activity are not developed well enough to enable a shared approach to monitoring and evaluation to develop. However, the school's self-evaluation summary provided for the inspection is largely accurate. With the leadership team working against a background of instability in staffing and falling numbers of pupils, some aspects of school management are in their early stages. Nevertheless, the lack of a formal system by which to review and evaluate school performance limits managerial effectiveness. This has been exacerbated by the need to share managerial responsibilities within a staff team that includes temporary teachers, resulting in some senior staff having too great a burden of managerial responsibility. Despite the staff's willingness to bear the burden, this has a negative impact upon the quality of management.
35. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is being developed systematically and thoroughly. The co-ordinator is developing an effective and manageable system of assessing and recording pupils' progress, one which encourages the professional development of teaching assistants through their regular and significant involvement in this process. She is also new to post but has prioritised quickly and accurately to identify assessment as a major area for development and is working effectively to ensure this.
36. The governing body is effectively involved in the work of the school. Under good leadership, it provides both challenge and support to the new leadership team and is helping to drive forward improvement. Governors are very clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses, and about what needs to be done to secure improvements. They are keeping a close watch over the implementation of plans to do this. Governors are aware of the difficulties that have resulted from recent staff changes and are working hard to provide a permanent and settled staff. They are knowledgeable about the school's progress since the last inspection and the challenges the new headteacher faces.
37. Governors take responsibility for keeping an overview of work in particular subjects. As part of this they receive regular reports from subject co-ordinators. This is sharpening co-ordinators' focus on improvement. Governors have a good knowledge of the work of the



school. They are ambitious and proud of their school and have an important input into the school's improvement cycle. At present they are devising their own governor's improvement plan in order to improve their skills. Governors take very seriously the need to keep themselves fully updated about their responsibilities. As a result they regularly attend local training sessions.

38. The school has had to cope with the financial difficulties that arise from falling numbers of pupils on roll. The governing body has set as a priority the need to keep staffing levels high and it continues to apply this policy. This has offset the difficulties associated with classes including pupils from different age groups, keeping class numbers on roll smaller than is found in most schools. The school is carrying forward a significant budget surplus but this is lessening each year as the governing body tries to keep staffing levels high in the face of the falling pupil numbers.
39. Whilst the costs of educating pupils at the school are above average (not unusual in a small school), the satisfactory achievement of pupils overall, the school's effective ethos, some clear strengths in teaching and the purposefulness of its governors and new leadership team mean that the school gives satisfactory value for money.

***Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005***

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	437201
Total expenditure	443122
Expenditure per pupil	3234.47

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	53336
Balance carried forward to the next	35000

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

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

40. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage of Learning (nursery and reception) is **good** overall with some very good features. Children are taught in a Foundation Stage unit with nursery children attending on a part time basis. Children's attainment on entry to reception is below that expected for their age in all areas of learning except personal and social education where it is line with expectations because of the good provision and emphasis placed upon this area of learning for nursery children.
41. Children settle well into school because of effective routines that make them feel safe, secure and confident. Curricular planning is good with an appropriate balance between teaching and structured play providing a good range of learning opportunities. Staff work very well together and good teaching ensures that children achieve well in all areas of learning. Satisfactory assessment is carried out to ensure that children progress appropriately to their next stage of learning. Due to the low attainment on entry, most children, when they enter Year 1, will still be working just below expectations for their age in communication language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. In personal, social and emotional development their attainment matches the level expected for their age.

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

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

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

- The curriculum effectively allows children to make choices and decisions and develop independence in their learning.
- A well planned indoor environment and good teaching ensure that all children achieve well.
- An effective staff team is skilled at promoting children's personal development in all activities.

#### **Commentary**

42. The good provision for children's personal social and emotional development permeates all areas of learning. As a result of very good planning and good teaching, independence in learning is skilfully promoted by providing an extensive choice of tasks and opportunities to play and work together. Well-organised indoor areas allow children opportunities to move freely between activities and to take responsibility for tidying up after themselves, making sure that their resources are ready for the next person. During focused group or whole class activities, reception children work co-operatively and listen attentively. Staff work well together and provide children with a good example in expectations of good behaviour and respect for one another. Effective use is made of praise to promote confidence and enjoyment in learning and staff have good relationships with the children. Both nursery and reception class children presented an assembly to the whole school and parents, with reception children in particular showing confidence and enthusiasm in speaking aloud to a large audience. Due to good teaching and the strong emphasis placed on this area of learning in the nursery class, children make good progress and most enter reception year in line with expectations and continue to meet expectations for their age by the time they move to Year 1.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good planning and good teaching ensure that children achieve well.
- In nursery there is early identification of need for additional support and individual needs are well met.
- A wide variety of imaginative play opportunities are offered to develop children's language skills.

### **Commentary**

43. As a result of children's very limited language and communication skills when they start in the nursery year, the school places great emphasis on the importance of speaking and listening throughout the Foundation Stage. Thorough and careful planning ensures that a wide range of useful opportunities are created to develop these skills. Children with special educational needs are well provided for and as a result they make good progress towards achieving the learning targets set for them. As a result of the nursery assessment programme, groups of nursery children work on a regular basis with a support worker who teaches a programme designed to specifically develop language and communication skills. There are also opportunities for nursery children to take home sacks filled with interesting activities to develop communication and language skills.
44. Teachers and support staff use good questioning to encourage children to develop their speech and to listen carefully. This good teaching ensures that children make good progress in acquiring the basic skills of communication and as a result they achieve well. Story is used effectively in nursery and reception to motivate children both in class and on the "Book Bus" where nursery children have story time along with the opportunity to choose a book to take home. Strong emphasis on correct letter formation is reinforced at home through well planned homework tasks. Areas for children to practise the early skills of writing are used confidently. Children achieve well in communication; language and literacy because of the good provision but due to the low levels of communication and language skills on entry, the majority of children do not reach expectations for their age at the start of Year 1.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching leads to children achieving well
- Staff use resources well to develop understanding in a practical way.
- Planning is thorough and linked to other areas of learning.
- Support staff make a very positive contribution to children's learning.

### **Commentary**

45. Children in both nursery and reception years achieve well because of the good range of practical activities planned to cover mathematical development. Teaching is good and support staff are well briefed and competent, which makes a positive impact on children's learning and their good achievement. Very clear and thorough planning by the teacher links mathematical development to other areas of learning. For example, children working on a topic about houses and homes created houses made of circles, squares, rectangles and triangles, which they could readily identify. Reception children used their ICT skills well to create repeating patterns and successfully sequenced numbers up to ten utilising cutting and pasting skills. Because of their low level of mathematical skills and concepts upon entry

to school, children reach standards that are just below expectations for their age at the time they enter Year 1.

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

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children learn and achieve well because of good teaching.
- The well planned curriculum for knowledge and understanding of the world is enhanced by many first hand learning opportunities.
- Children are successfully improving their skills using ICT.
- Opportunities for children to explore and investigate are always available and learning is fun.
- Provision in the outdoor area provides insufficient stimulating opportunities.

### **Commentary**

46. Very good planning incorporates opportunities to extend the children's learning both in and out of school. The Foundation Stage indoor area provides an exciting environment for learning with good resources, especially for construction. Large play equipment available outdoors is satisfactory and there is a small allotment area and wormery. Out of school visits give children opportunities to develop an awareness of where they live and recognise local features such as different types of houses when they go out for walks. They visit the local dental surgery and learn to appreciate the different jobs people do from visits by the fire service and police. First hand experiences are provided wherever possible. For example, tadpole development is also being observed through first hand experience. Children have opportunities to consider the best choice of materials for different purposes. For example, they had to find, cut up and stick suitable material to keep us warm onto a body shape and find waterproof materials to keep us dry.

47. Regular opportunities for learning in ICT ensure that children achieve well. Most children in the reception class have good mouse control and print off their work independently. They use paint programs competently? To create their own pictures and design houses for their topic work. They successfully use drag and drop tools. Learning is supported by carefully chosen programs in other areas. Children achieve well in their development of knowledge and understanding of the world and from low attainment on entry are just below expectations for their age by the end of the Foundation Stage.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The outside play area is only timetabled for short sessions each day for both nursery and reception years and this limits opportunities for achievement.
- Children are successfully improving their skills using ICT.
- Opportunities to develop fine motor control are good.

### **Commentary**

48. A small outdoor play area is timetabled separately for nursery and reception aged children to aid physical development. Children enjoy going outdoors and daily opportunities are provided. There is a large hard surface area immediately outside the classroom door but as it is used for Year 1 and 2 physical education and break time and the area is not securely fenced, it does not form part of the Foundation Stage play area and is not used for continuous outdoor play provision. Children have access to a good range of large play equipment. Small apparatus, such as balls, hoops and bean bags, are used well to develop throwing, catching, controlling a ball and balancing a bean bag, resulting in children acquiring these skills well. Support staff are well informed to develop the children's skills effectively.

49. In the classroom, children have many opportunities to develop their manipulative skills appropriately through their regular access to play dough, jigsaws, construction materials, writing, painting, cutting and sticking equipment. They take full advantage of these opportunities because quality of teaching is good as a result of effective planning which clearly identifies the learning to be acquired. Both nursery and reception age children achieve well from below average attainment on entry with standards being just below expectations for their age by the end of the reception year.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A stimulating range of activities are planned to develop children's imagination and creativity.
- Creative development is often promoted across other areas of learning.
- Teaching is good and children achieve well.

### **Commentary**

50. Children enter school with creative skills below those expected for their age and reach standards that are just below expectations for their age as they enter Year 1. They achieve well during the Foundation Stage because effective teaching stimulates them to learn. Children receive good opportunities to develop their creative skills through imaginative play, art and music. Reception children independently created collages with colour, texture and shape using a wide range of resources, including material, wool, feathers, paper, foil containers, etc. available to them. However, their communication and language skills prevented them from explaining clearly what they were making. Good opportunities are provided for children to be creative using a paint program on the computers and there are both indoor and outdoor opportunities for mark making and painting. Creative development is promoted well across other areas of learning. For example, children developed their skills of art and design well when they made their own houses of straw and sticks for a display linked to their topic on homes.. Musical instruments are often used to give children a basic grounding in the skills of listening to and playing music. Good use of imaginative play helps children to express their thoughts and ideas as different character'.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

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

- Pupils achieve well in reading and their attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is at the national expectation. .
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to the literacy targets in their individual education plans, helped by good support from teaching assistants.
- Higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could in writing because the tasks set for them often do not offer suitable levels of challenge.
- Assessment of pupils' progress and the marking of their work do not contribute sufficiently to improving the standard of their written work.
- Weaknesses in the subject are recognised but the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is under-developed and this prevents those weaknesses being addressed as effectively as they should be.

#### **Commentary**

51. Pupils of all attainments achieve well in reading for the following reasons:

- young pupils learn letter sounds and combinations ('phonics') through the successful teaching of a phonics programme;
- short teaching sessions focus successfully upon learning and practising skills;
- extra support is provided for pupils who need it;
- pupils are given extra reading practice by voluntary helpers;
- a successful partnership is established with parents so that pupils are well motivated and gain further practice; and their reading is closely monitored and assessed
- pupils have access to plenty of interesting books and so develop a liking for reading;
- the school library provides books from which pupils can research;
- older pupils research written material on the Internet as part of various topics and projects;
- work in other subjects very often leads to pupils using their reading skills to research and retrieve information.

As a result, pupils attain national standards overall and develop an interest in books.

52. In writing, pupils with special educational needs achieve well, as they also do in reading, because:

- the learning targets set for them are specific and suitably challenging;
- they are given good support by teaching assistants;
- their progress is assessed closely by teachers and teaching assistants;
- following this, learning programmes are modified if necessary;
- parental support is sought as appropriate.

53. A strong feature of the above 'success stories' is the provision of structured learning programmes that motivate pupils to learn and provide them with a suitable level of challenge in the work they have to do. A further important feature is the effective assessment of pupils' work and the adjustment of future learning programmes to meet their needs. Lower attaining pupils also benefit from additional support. The good quality of support given to the groups within which they work means that their achievement is always at least satisfactory and sometimes good.

54. Such a structured approach is not sufficiently developed in writing for other groups of pupils, particularly higher attainers. When a writing task is provided, in English lessons or through work in other subjects, it is often the same for all groups of pupils. Higher attaining pupils in particular suffer because of this. Average attainers usually achieve at least satisfactorily in such tasks whilst lower attainers often benefit from adult support. Higher attainers, however, are not given suitably challenging learning activities to help them achieve the higher levels of which they are capable. It is this lack of attention to providing such pupils with challenge – and with challenging targets – that brings the quality of teaching in English down from good to satisfactory overall. Teachers establish good relationships and often conduct the direct teaching parts of literacy lessons well. It is when it comes to the pupils' active learning sessions that expectations are not high enough. This is a major factor in pupils' below average attainment in writing, at Year 2 and in English overall being below average at Year 6.
55. A further factor that has a negative influence upon achievement in writing is teachers' marking. Very rarely does it provide pupils with advice on how to improve work. Very rarely is it targeted at specific learning points. Supportive comments are often provided but those key, sharply focused pointers to improvement are rarely evident. Pupils are beginning to use learning targets in literacy lessons. This system is in its early stages and is not yet embedded in daily routines. Pupils know that they have targets and can show them to visitors but they are rarely seen to refer to them. Equally, teachers do not make sufficient use of individual learning targets as a guide when marking work or by getting pupils to become independent learners and self-evaluators of the quality of their own work by checking it themselves against their learning targets.
56. The subject co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership. She has ensured that subject weaknesses are recognised in the school improvement plan and has introduced a useful initiative that focuses upon developing pupils' speaking skills as a means of improving their writing. It was only possible to evaluate this scheme to a very limited extent during the inspection but it was seen to be operating successfully in a good Year 1 lesson. The use of assessment data is not sufficiently developed and monitoring teaching and learning to identify and effect improvements is insufficient.
57. Standards are higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. Although they declined over the last two years, work seen this year indicates that this decline has been halted. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

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

58. The school makes good efforts to help pupils develop their skills of reading and writing through work in other subjects although this is not expressed systematically in curricular planning. Pupils write accounts in geography and history and are sometimes encouraged to write imaginatively. Accounts of investigations in science are written up. Where possible, pupils use computers to present their work attractively or to highlight specific points. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 used different colours to identify subjects, verbs and prepositional phrases.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupil achievement is good overall although higher attaining pupils could sometimes do better.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge
- Behaviour in mathematics lessons is good

- Pupils enjoy learning about mathematics
- Assessment systems are not sufficiently rigorous.

## **Commentary**

59. Standards in mathematics match the national expectation in Year 2 and Year 6. Given children's poor skills, notably in language, when they start school, most achieve well by the end of Year 6. Two features of the school's work contribute to the good level of achievement. Firstly, the school has a friendly, welcoming atmosphere that allows pupils to settle in quickly and, secondly, teachers' knowledge in mathematics is secure.
60. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall, with a good emphasis given to teaching basic skills. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to plan appropriately a range of activities that meet the needs of most pupils. However, on occasion, not enough attention is given to challenging higher attaining pupils. In too many lessons, planning did not identify the needs of higher attainers and this group were often not challenged sufficiently. In most lessons learning intentions are clear and instructions precise and, as a result, pupils are secure about what they have to learn. The teachers' good questioning and clear explanations as they work through examples enable pupils to build satisfactorily on their previous learning. Aids such as number fans, clocks and number lines support pupils' thinking well but opportunities are missed in most lessons to use computers to further develop thinking and mathematical skills. Older pupils particularly enjoy the stimulating mental calculations at the beginning of lessons, which effectively sharpen their mental skills. The brisk pace, lively delivery and teachers' effective questioning skills challenge pupils' thinking as they eagerly explain different strategies for solving problems. Support staff are deployed well to support pupils with special educational needs, ensuring they achieve well in relation to their individual learning targets.
61. Most pupils have very good attitudes to their work, showing interest and enjoyment and responding to the teachers' expectations by behaving very well. This, together with the very good relationships and good use of praise and encouragement by adults, has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
62. A system for setting curricular targets for pupils is in place but it lacks rigour and in its present form is not effective. Test data and end of year information are not analysed thoroughly in order to assist teachers in their planning and to set individual and group targets and to check individual pupils' progress.
63. Since the last inspection good leadership and management has been maintained. Despite the significant turnover of teachers, the co-ordinator has had a good impact on maintaining the quality of teaching in mathematics. Resources are good overall and, together with appropriate mathematical displays, are used well to support learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

64. Although there are sound links between mathematics and other subjects, opportunities are sometimes missed to develop mathematical skills across the full range of learning. Information and communication technology is only used occasionally to support pupil's mathematical understanding, for example, and time lines in history help pupils to develop a sense of chronology.

## **SCIENCE**



Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Emphasis on investigation and experimentation is having a positive impact upon standards and pupils' achievement.
- Higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Scientific vocabulary is used and displayed effectively throughout the school.
- The subject co-ordinator has little opportunity to monitor and evaluate classroom teaching and assessment information is not used effectively.

### **Commentary**

65. Science remains a subject for improvement as it was at the previous inspection, though standards are higher than they were at that time. Currently, pupils in Years 2 and 6 reach standards that are below the national expectation and higher attainers do not achieve as well as they could. The recent focus on developing scientific skills and the introduction of a whole school scheme, which provides consistency and progression, is having a positive impact upon pupils' achievement. However, due to lack of sufficient investigative opportunities in the past, pupils do not have the knowledge and skills to build on prior learning and consequently are not working at expected levels.

66. Higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should for two main reasons:

- sometimes the task set for them is too easy; they finish quickly and are not provided with further work to extend their learning;
- they are provided with the same task as other pupils without any stated expectation that they should achieve more challenging learning targets within that task.

67. This results in teaching being no more than satisfactory overall, although some good teaching seen during the inspection. For example, in a Year 5/6, a strong emphasis on practical investigation meant that pupils achieved well when devising their own investigation by making parachutes to show how the amount of air resistance affects the speed of a moving object. Pupils understood the importance of changing one variable at a time and could explain the reasons why. Well-led discussions in a Year 4/5 lesson also encouraged pupils to consolidate their learning about fair testing as they prepared to experiment with how the length of a shadow is affected by the distance of the light source.

68. Subject leadership is unsatisfactory. However the present subject leader is new to post and has already begun to make improvements. She has designed pro-forma for each year group in order to support staff and pupils with investigative work and is currently creating an action plan for the subject. She organised a science day to successfully raise the profile of investigative work, involving a wide range of opportunities for all pupils, including making and testing hot air balloons, crystal growing and activities related to sound, magnets and testing temperatures of liquids. The day was also an open day for parents to enjoy this aspect of the curriculum with their children. Work scrutiny has taken place but the co-ordinator has not had the opportunity to monitor lessons. Although test results have been analysed, the information has not been used to address the need to improve standards in science not to help teachers plan their lessons with a greater focus on individual learning need. The school recognises the need to focus on improving standards in science; however, the main recent focus has understandably been to improve standards in English and mathematics. Science is planned to take a higher priority in next year's school improvement plan.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in work seen are below the national expectation at Year 2 and Year 6.
- The impact of teaching is adversely affected by the poor quality and insufficiency of resources.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is not in place.
- The school has a very good strategic plan for subject improvement.

## **Commentary**

69. Provision is unsatisfactory because resources are poor and this limits pupils' achievement. The school has two computers in each classroom but some of these are unreliable and hence limit opportunities for learning. The school has not invested significantly in hardware until this year when it bought 17 PCs that are soon to be sited in a computer suite. A suitable room has been designated as a computer suite and it is due to be in use at the start of the new school year. Because of the lack of reliable resources and also because of the school timetable, a limited amount of teaching could be observed during the inspection. However, using evidence gathered from these lessons and from other sources it is clear that standards are below the nationally expected levels for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6.
70. Pupils in Year 6 are confident users of the word processor but are working at a level of skill more usually associated with pupils a year or two younger. They are very unsure about how to use a spreadsheet. More appropriate to their age, they could explain the use of control technology, using a program that models the changing of traffic lights. Although some had used a multi media resource they were unsure about the content or working of multi media presentations. However, pupils know how to access the Internet and do this to conduct searches as part of work in other subjects. They show good awareness of the school's Internet safety policy. Of those pupils observed using computers in Year 2, around half lacked the skills to make alterations to text on the computer.
71. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in one lesson observed and unsatisfactory in the other. In both lessons, teachers strove hard to combat the lack of resources, showing pupils the skills they needed to develop. However, the lack of suitable machines meant that in one class progress was limited although satisfactory overall. In the other class, the lesson became unsatisfactory when pupils did not gain access to computers to practise the skills demonstrated for them. Hence very little learning occurred in this lesson.
72. Although subject planning satisfactorily follows national guidelines, no formal assessment of pupils' progress takes place. This prevents teachers from gaining valuable information to help them plan for pupils' learning needs. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory, with too little having been done to ensure that the resources needed to teach well were available. However, there is cause for optimism about improvement. The recently bought PCs will soon be operating in a computer suite that is due to be available for use in September 2005. The school has a high quality strategic plan for the development of the subject. It covers in detail all areas of subject management and forms a very good basis for development. In the light of these recent developments, subject leadership is judged to be satisfactory.

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

73. Teachers mostly make good use of insufficient resources in order to help pupils use ICT in other subjects. Internet searches and various aspects of word processing are two of the ways in which work in subjects such as history, geography and writing are enhanced. Pupils use commercial programs to help them develop artistic skills. However, the lack of resources – and in some cases their poor quality – means that opportunities for using ICT across the curriculum are limited. This is exemplified in mathematics.

## HUMANITIES

74. **History** and **geography** were sampled during this inspection. No lessons were observed and no judgements are made about overall provision or about the quality of teaching and learning. A scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with pupils indicate that pupils are achieving satisfactorily in both history and geography. However, in both subjects, standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are just below those expected for pupils' ages, although higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. There is presently not enough focus on developing pupils' skills in these two subjects, with the emphasis being on activities rather than developing skills and understanding. For example, pupils have some knowledge of a range of periods in history but cannot discuss the key aspects or how they have used historical enquiry skills through the study of different historical events. Opportunities for visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum are limited. When such activities are organised, however, it is clear that they have a significant impact upon learning. Good use is made of book and artefact loans to enhance resources.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

75. **Art and design**, **design and technology** and **music** were sampled in this inspection and physical education was inspected in full. No lessons were observed in art and design or music and only one lesson was observed in design and technology. Therefore no judgements are made about overall provision or the quality of teaching in these subjects. In art and design, it is evident from the good quality displays in corridors and classrooms that the subject has a high profile and enhances the learning environment. Pupils reach expected standards and achieve well. Teachers use art effectively to enrich work in other subjects, particularly history. In Years 5 and 6, a project about Greece had influenced pupils to paint portraits and carefully look at patterns on urns. In Years 4 and 5 there was a very good display of what pupils have learnt about the Tudor period. In Years 3 and 4, pencil sketches of Tudor houses clearly showed how well the pupils had used their observational skills. Younger pupils had used a variety of skills such as folding, plaiting, pleating and twisting to produce pictures that were displayed in the hall. Pupils clearly take a pride in their work, which is also valued by the school, evident in the way it is carefully displayed.

76. In design and technology, the nationally recommended programme of work has been successfully adapted to ensure the skills are taught systematically and that pupils' learning develops in successive steps throughout the school. The quality of teaching in the one lesson seen during the inspection, in Year 2, was good. This lesson featured the pupils making puppets. Pupils were clear about the tasks they had to undertake, there was a good selection of resources and the strongly practical bias helped them to make good progress. Displays in classrooms reflect the high profile this subject takes in the curriculum. Design and technology is well resourced and effective links are made with other subjects. For example, in history pupils have made Tudor bread and shelters for the Ancient Egyptians.

77. In music, teachers are trailing a commercial scheme to assist them in their teaching. A good range of musical instruments is available to support teaching music in the classrooms. The purchase of a CD to help pupils with hymn singing has resulted in good singing in assemblies. Pupils sing tunefully and enjoy adding hand movements at appropriate times in hymn singing. The support of specialist teachers enhances provision and makes music a fun activity. Displays in classrooms show that music has links with other regions of the world. In Years 5 and 6, for example, Pan Pipes and rain sticks have been used to support a dance project on the rain forest in South America whilst pupils in Years 4 and 5 have looked at and played traditional African instruments. Pupils are taught to play the keyboard, violin and guitars and there is a small choir. The proportion of pupils taking advantage of subsidised music tuition is small.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are enthusiastic and responsive and try their best to succeed.
- Behaviour in lessons is good
- Some lessons lack pace and contain too few opportunities for pupils to demonstrate effective use of skills.

### Commentary

78. The school has adapted a nationally recommended programme in order to plan for the physical education curriculum. Satisfactory assessments on pupil progress are made and monitored by the co-ordinator.

79. In the lessons observed pupils were appropriately dressed. Teachers ensured that pupils warmed up and had due regard to space. They clearly identified any potential health and safety issues, for example, encouraging pupils to be careful when using a racquet near another pupil. Where teaching was seen to be good, pupils achieved well because the teacher had very high expectations of them. In a Year 5/6 dance lesson, pupil behaviour was very good. They listened intently to the teacher and followed the rhythm of the music carefully in order to move with expression around the hall. The way the teacher told a story, good questioning and enthusiasm from the pupils enabled the creation of an atmosphere conducive to expressive dance. As a result, pupils achieved well. Pupils achieved less when the teacher did not make expectations clear and when limited opportunity was given for them to improve their performance. Pupils were seldom used to demonstrate good technique so as to help others improve their work. Throughout all lessons pupils displayed very good attitudes to learning. They were enthusiastic and responsive, and tried their best to succeed.

80. Leadership and management are satisfactory. All strands of the subject, including swimming, are taught regularly during the course of a year. Dance features prominently on the curriculum with after school clubs to support the interests of both boys and girls. Although the curriculum develops team skills they are not further developed through pupils representing the school in organised sporting activities.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

81. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are largely taught through weekly circle time lessons in each class along with weekly 'Golden Time' which is linked to the religious education scheme of work. Pupils are polite and courteous. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and how their actions impact on others. Staff provide pupils with a good example of how to relate well to each other and they take time to listen and respond to their needs and worries. The playground has a designated 'Friendship Stop' area and older pupils are involved in a 'buddy' system with Foundation Stage children. The school is actively involved in the 'Healthy Schools' project and is rightly proud of its achievements, particularly in relation to the award received in 2004. An active school council ensures that pupils' views are heard through their class representative. The council has also recently begun to produce a useful end of term newsletter giving information about what has been happening in each class and fundraising that has taken place, thus contributing to pupils awareness of the needs of others and of the contribution they make to the wider community.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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