

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN VIANNEY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

St Helens

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104812

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Claire Knowles

Lead inspector: Dr Brian Male

Dates of inspection: 23rd - 25th May 2005

Inspection number: 267810

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	150
School address:	Elton Head Road Sutton Heath St Helens Merseyside
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs C Edgerton
Date of previous inspection:	July 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This small Roman Catholic aided primary school takes pupils from 4 to 11 years old. At the time of the inspection there were 150 pupils in six classes. Standards of attainment are generally below average on entry. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, and the percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is also above average. The school takes a high proportion of its pupils from the Traveller community. There is a fairly high number of transient pupils, those who arrive in school or leave part-way through the year. Many of these are not from Traveller families. There is a very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school has been successful in achieving various national awards: Schools Achievement Award 1999 and 2001, Investors in People 2003, Healthy Schools Award 2004, and the Basic Skills Quality Mark 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
14906	Dr Brian Male	Lead inspector	English History Geography English as an additional language
19419	Mrs Sue Boyle	Lay Inspector	
6169	Dr Melvyn Bradshaw	Team Inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music Physical education Special educational needs
22704	Mr Gary Williams	Team Inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Art and design Design and technology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school with many very good features. The acting headteacher provides very good leadership at a time of transition for the school and has created a positive climate of continuing improvement. The good quality of the teaching ensures that pupils achieve well. The school provides a very supportive community where pupils are cared for very well. Leadership and management are good overall. The school provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The acting headteacher has led the school very well through a time of transition.
- Children receive a very good start in the Reception class.
- The school provides a very good programme of extra-curricular activities that encourages pupils' positive attitudes to school.
- Good teaching promotes good achievement, but the level of challenge for pupils and the way they are engaged in learning is not consistently high in all lessons.
- The school's very positive ethos encourages the very good relationships throughout the school and enables transient pupils to settle quickly and achieve well.
- Extra support for children from Traveller families is not always sufficiently well focused on their needs and does not integrate them well into the school.
- There are very good partnerships with parents, the community and other schools that enhance provision.

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment have risen and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are better. The quality of teaching and the effectiveness of leadership and management have been improved. The partnership with parents and the community is now stronger. All of the key issues have been successfully addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.
Similar schools are those where a similar proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals.*

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Standards in English, mathematics and science in Year 6 this year are slightly below the national average. These standards are generally above the average of similar schools. Standards in Year 2 are in line with the national average in mathematics and below average in reading and writing. This is lower than in other years as there is a higher-than-usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are generally in line with national expectations across the school. Other subjects were only sampled, but achievement is generally good. Present children are making very good progress through the Reception class and achieve very well, particularly in the personal and communication aspects.

Many pupils start in the Reception class with standards of attainment well below those usually found, and although present Reception children are achieving very well, in the past many pupils

entered Year 1 with standards still well below average. So the overall standards found by the inspection represent good achievement for the pupils.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Most pupils have very positive attitudes to school and are keen to take part in lessons, although a small number of older pupils do not always show such commitment. Pupils' behaviour is similar in that most behave very well, but a small number of older pupils are sometimes aggressive or disruptive. Pupils' personal qualities such as relationships and concern for others are often very good. Most pupils are open, friendly and very willing to communicate. The rate of attendance is well below average, partly because transient pupils are required to be marked absent after they have left, and partly because of a small number of families whose children do not attend regularly. However, the new leadership has made a good start to addressing this issue, and the rate of attendance is improving.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good overall. The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good. Teachers work hard and provide a stimulating learning environment. Teaching is very good in the Reception class. In the best lessons, teachers enable pupils to participate actively in learning through a range of strategies such as carrying out investigations, role-play and the use of paired discussions. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, the level of challenge is not so high and the pupils are not involved so actively in their own learning. Teaching assistants provide good support for learning.

There is a broad curriculum enhanced by a very good programme of extra-curricular activities. There are good support and guidance for pupils, and the school copes well with a fairly high number of pupils coming and going each year. The provision for children from Traveller families does not always focus sufficiently well on individual needs because they are too often supported in a group out of the class. This also hinders their integration with other pupils. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs, although some individual education plans (IEPs) are inconsistent in their targets and programmes. The school's partnership with parents and the community is very good, and this enhances learning and promotes pupils' positive attitudes. The school is well staffed with teachers and support assistants. The accommodation is good and teaching and learning resources are generally good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The acting headteacher provides very good leadership, and has led the school particularly successfully through a difficult period when more than half the staff changed in the space of a few months and the acting deputy head was on long-term absence because of illness. Almost all the subject leaders were new to their posts at the time of the inspection but were already providing effective leadership. The governors have a very good overview of the school, and make a very effective contribution to its development. Together with the local education authority, the governors have provided very good support for the acting headteacher. The school is managed effectively.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of the school, and there is no area where a significant number would like to see improvement. Pupils are also very positive about the school, and the school takes appropriate steps to ensure that pupils' views are sought and acted upon.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In order to build on the already good provision, the next steps for the school are to ensure that:

- Lessons are consistently challenging for all groups, and that pupils are encouraged to be actively engaged in their learning.

- Support for children from Traveller families responds effectively to individual needs and promotes their integration with other pupils in the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils' achievement is good overall, and very good in the Reception class. Standards are generally below the national average, but above those of similar schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make very good progress through the Reception class and achieve very well.
- Good teaching and the very welcoming and positive ethos of the school enable the many transient pupils to achieve well.
- Standards in speaking are not as high as reading and writing, but overall standards in English represent good achievement.
- Standards in ICT have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are generally in line with national expectations across the school.
- The school's focus on science in Years 3-6 has been successful in raising standards.

Commentary

1. Overall standards by the end of Year 6 are below the national average, but as most pupils enter school with standards of attainment well below those usually found, Year 6 standards represent good overall achievement. Standards across the school have improved since the previous inspection. The very good start now being given to children in the Reception class together with the good quality of the teaching across the school mean that standards are continuing to rise.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.9 (25.5)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.4 (24.6)	27.0 (26.8)
science	27.4 (28.9)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 53 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Inspection evidence indicates that current Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are higher than in 2004, although all three subjects are below the national average. Standards in science are much higher than in 2004 and indicate that the focus on this subject has been successful. Standards in national tests have varied over the last five years between subjects and from year to year. The indications from the present Years 5 and 6 are that standards are rising and more consistent between subjects. This results from the present quality of teaching and the improved use of tracking data to focus on particular needs.
3. The school's scores in national tests for seven-year-olds in 2004 (table below) were well above the national average in writing, and in line with the national average in reading and mathematics. These standards were well above those of similar schools in writing and mathematics, and above that average in reading.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.8 (15.9)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.1 (16.1)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.6 (15.6)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 49 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Inspection evidence suggests that current standards in Year 2 are not as high as in 2004 in reading and writing, but standards have been maintained in mathematics. There are only 14 pupils in this year group, and such variations are to be expected with such small numbers. There is a relatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the group, but particularly good teaching and a small group have ensured that achievement is good.
5. Children are making very good progress through the Reception class and by the time they enter Year 1, many attain the nationally expected 'Early Learning Goals'. The very good achievement results from the consistently very good quality of the teaching and the independence given to children to engage in a rich range of stimulating activities. The two teachers are new to the Reception class and records indicate that progress has not always been so quick in the past.
6. Standards in (ICT) have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are now in line with the national average. The improvement results from good teaching and effective use of the new computer suite. Other subjects were only sampled, so there is no formal judgement about attainment in these, but achievement is generally good.
7. There is a significant proportion of pupils from Traveller families whose lifestyle often means that they miss parts of their schooling. Most of these pupils make at least appropriate progress and those who have moved right through the school with few absences make good progress. There is a great deal of specific support for these pupils, but it is often directed at all the travellers in a class as a group rather than to their individual needs, and so does not always address the specific gaps that some pupils might have in their learning. This limits their progress.
8. In addition to pupils from Traveller families, a significant number of pupils join the school part-way through each year. This inevitably disrupts their education and means that they miss parts of the course being followed by other children in the school. The school's very supportive ethos ensures that these pupils settle quickly and a focus on their particular needs ensures that they make good progress in terms of their starting point. There is a very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, and good support has enabled them to achieve well.
9. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. It matches that of other pupils because of the effective care and support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
10. Overall standards are higher than at the time of the previous inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have good attitudes to school and behave well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most are keen to learn and work well independently and collaboratively, but not all older pupils are positive in their approach to work.
- Behaviour is generally very good in lessons, and satisfactory in the playground and around school.
- Relationships are generally very good, but a small minority of older boys do not always get on well with others.
- Attendance is well below average but is improving, and punctuality is very good.

Commentary

11. Most pupils have very positive attitudes, but a small minority of older pupils are not always positive in their approach to school. Behaviour in class is generally good, with examples of very good behaviour particularly in the Reception class and Year 2. Most pupils behave well in the playground and around school, but a small minority of older boys can be aggressive at times and tension needs to be diffused by mid-day supervisory staff. In discussion, pupils expressed concern about this. Staff, pupils, parents and governors form very good working relationships and show mutual respect and trust. Pupils feel happy and well supported by all adult staff within the school. They are aware of teachers' high expectations for behaviour and work output, and generally respond positively to this in the classroom. They want to do their best, and a scrutiny of their presentation in their books confirms this. Pupils are willing to take responsibility for their own learning, but do not always have the opportunity to do so within lessons. Threading through almost all lessons is most pupils' eagerness to learn, an enthusiasm to do well and an enjoyment of learning.
12. Pupils behave well because they are helped to understand very clearly the impact their actions have upon others. The headteacher and staff are well aware of the necessity of early integration into the life of the school and pupils who start in Reception or other classes are very well cared for so they very quickly feel a part of the school family. Pupils learn responsibilities from an early age and as they proceed through the school their responsibilities increase. However, a number of older boys do not subscribe fully to this ethos of responsibility. Since the previous inspection, behaviour and attitudes in classes have improved but the behaviour during lunchtime does not appear to be as good as the previous report identified. No pupil has been excluded.
13. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to learn that they must think for themselves, appreciate that the views of others matter and understand what lies behind the rules. Visits contribute very positively to promoting moral and social development. Whenever opportunities occur to promote cultural understanding, the school encompasses them, and it has been successful in promoting understanding and appreciation of Traveller culture.
14. Pupils with special educational needs are keen to work and are supported in doing so by their teachers and teaching assistants. They have very good relationships with all the adults who teach them and feel safe and secure, but integration for some pupils from Traveller families is not always best programmed. This tends to minimise their inclusion in school life. The school acknowledges this and is to address this concern. The school is generally inclusive in its approach but still makes some unnecessary gender distinctions.

15. The low attendance figures are partly due to the policy which requires schools to keep pupils from the Traveller community on the register, even though they have temporarily left the school to travel. However, this is not the only reason for the low attendance, because the attendance of those pupils who are not travellers has also been well below average, mainly because of a small number of families who do not send their children to school regularly. The new leadership has made a good start in tackling this. A good range of incentives is now in place and is beginning to have an impact. Attendance has improved and although it is still well below national figures, it is average compared to similar schools in the area. This represents a significant improvement. Pupils come to school on time and instances of lateness are very rare indeed.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.1	School data	0.7
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall, and often very good. The curriculum is good overall and extra-curricular activities are very good. There is good support and guidance for pupils, and the very good partnership with parents and the community contributes to learning.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall, and are often very good. Assessment is good overall and improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers work hard and the overall good quality of the teaching promotes good achievement.
- Teaching is consistently very good in the Reception class.
- The focus of teaching has been improved through the use of assessment information.
- In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, the level of challenge is not as high as in the best lessons, and pupils are not as actively engaged in their learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 34 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	12 (35%)	10 (29%)	10 (29%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

16. Teaching is consistently very good in the Reception class where pupils make a particularly good start to their education and achieve very well. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT and history in Years 1 to 6, and good in physical education (PE) in Years 1 and 2. It was not possible to see sufficient lessons to make judgements in other subjects.
17. Assessment is being used effectively in the Reception class and in English and mathematics to identify the key skills and concepts needed by different groups of pupils so that teaching is well focused. Good assessments are being made in science and ICT and these are beginning

to be used more specifically, but have not yet had such impact. Assessments in other subjects such as history and geography are not yet so specific and so impact is limited.

18. Where teaching is best, the level of challenge for pupils is high and the activities are well chosen to promote learning. For example, in a very good ICT lesson, Year 2 pupils were challenged to develop a 'decision tree' to identify different animals. The use of very helpful examples and effective questioning by the teacher enabled pupils to frame 'yes-no' questions that would separate them into two groups. An excellent Reception class lesson challenged pupils to make quite complicated calculations, but the use of actual objects in a cake shop situation enabled them to meet the challenge. The fact that this was carried out in French with such young children ("Une tartelette, s'il vous plait") made the achievement all the more impressive.
19. Another feature of the best lessons is the way in which pupils are involved actively in their learning. For example, in a very good Year 5 science lesson, pupils were given the independence, within clear guidance, to select their own materials and methods in an investigation into how balls bounce. The independence enabled them to work out the relationship between the height of drop and bounce as well as investigate the effect of different surfaces and cope with how to reconcile the variations in a series of measurements. These approaches enthuse the pupils as well as deepening their understanding. In a very good Year 2 history lesson about Samuel Pepys, pupils used sharpened feathers to write a diary. This was both enjoyable and very effective in giving the pupils an insight into the writing methods of the time.
20. Some teachers have a good range of strategies to engage pupils in the lesson and to deepen their understanding. For example, some classes make effective use of 'talking partners' where pupils discuss issues and ideas with a fellow pupil. There was good use of 'hotseating' in a Year 1 lesson where the teacher took the role of a character from a book so that the pupils could ask her questions. In a Year 5 history lesson, pupils worked in pairs to agree the key features of the ancient Indus Valley civilisation. These techniques, alongside others such as role-play and group discussions, are also effective in helping to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. However, not all classes make extensive use of such techniques.
21. Where lessons were satisfactory rather than good or very good, it was often because the pace was slower or because the tasks were mundane, such as the completion of straightforward worksheets. These lessons did not give pupils the independence to investigate, involve them in such exciting activities or use the sort of engaging techniques as those described above.
22. Classroom management is generally good, and some potentially challenging pupils are managed with sensitivity. This management is most effective where the approach is positive and focused on raising pupils' self-esteem. Where the approach is more negative, pupils do not always react well and some are resentful.
23. Pupils who have special educational needs receive good support and achieve well. This is because class teachers have a good understanding of the learning requirements of these pupils and ensure that work is well matched to their attainment, even though some IEP targets are rather vague. In addition, when teaching assistants are present in lessons, they work effectively with teachers and offer extra support to ensure that the individual pupils' needs are met effectively. There is particularly effective support for a statemented child that meets his needs very well indeed.
24. There is a good deal of extra support for pupils from travelling families. These pupils are well supported and effectively integrated into the class in Years 1 and 2. However, in Years 3 to 6, these pupils are not sufficiently included in the classes and too often are taken out as a group for support or placed on the periphery of the class. This means that support is not always focused sufficiently on their specific individual needs. There is often a significant difference in attainment within these groups, and differences in the work they have missed, and these cannot be addressed effectively without more specific focus. This grouping has the added

disadvantage of marking out children from Traveller families from the others and so making integration more difficult. This is compounded when the groups are taken out of the classroom for extended periods.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum. There are very good opportunities for enrichment. Staffing is good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has developed an interesting curriculum, with good links being made between different subjects.
- A wide range of activities effectively enriches the curriculum.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good, but individual education plans lack consistency.
- Traveller pupils are not always sufficiently included in class activities.

Commentary

25. The school provides a good curriculum for its pupils. Good progress in improving the curriculum has been made since the previous inspection. Particularly good improvement has been made in ICT, which now meets requirements and is used well to support learning in many subjects. Statutory requirements are met, but on occasions the time given to English and mathematics is relatively high, thus reducing time available for other subjects. Despite this, the school works hard to ensure that all subjects are covered in sufficient depth and breadth and it is now looking at the organisation of the mornings to improve further breadth and balance.
26. In the Reception class, children experience a rich and varied curriculum in a stimulating environment. In Years 1 to 6, the English and mathematics curricula provide pupils with a good range of activities, and planning ensures that the needs of the different age groups in a class are met. In science, the curriculum includes a good balance between developing good subject knowledge and investigative skills. The effective use of staff means that older pupils are always taught in single-age classes for science, and this has helped raise standards. ICT skills are developed effectively and good use is made of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. Increasingly the curriculum shows innovation, especially in the links between different subjects and the way staff bring it alive, for instance, by dressing in role. In Year 2, pupils have linked history and art and design by making pictures to illustrate the 'Great Fire of London', while in Year 6, pupils used ICT to explore changes that had occurred in Britain since 1948. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHE), but it is not yet planned in sufficient detail. The curriculum is enhanced by the teaching of French and Spanish to Year 4 to 6 in conjunction with the local secondary school.
27. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they make good progress. The school has effective procedures for the early identification and monitoring of these pupils; detailed records are now being kept, and all these pupils have an individual education plan. However, these vary considerably in quality and too many contain targets that are too general and do not contain detail of precisely what action is to be taken to support the pupils' learning. Nevertheless, provision is good because effective co-operation between teacher and learning assistants ensures that needs are identified and effective support is given to individuals and groups of pupils. Good support for the very few pupils for whom English is an additional language ensures they have full access to the curriculum.
28. Traveller pupils are encouraged and consistently supported, but too often in Years 3 to 5 they are not sufficiently integrated into all classroom activities and on occasions traveller pupils are

inappropriately withdrawn for individual or group support. Aspects of traveller culture are celebrated within the school's curriculum and this has a positive effect on self-esteem.

29. A very good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, music, ICT and art, enriches pupils' experiences. A successful innovation is the weekly 'book breakfast', when pupils from a particular year meet for tea and toast while discussing books they have read. This activity recently included Reception class children. Good use is made of aspects of local art and culture, and local visits make the curriculum more interesting. The school has good numbers of teachers and support staff. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, although the outdoor area for Reception class children is cramped.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety for pupils are good. Provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is good. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Induction arrangements are very good.
- The school works well with support agencies.
- There is scope to involve pupils more in their learning.

Commentary

30. The school's good provision has been maintained since the previous inspection. Risk assessment for health and safety is well established and staff are clear about first aid procedures. The school has built on its good arrangements for child protection to enable it to better monitor concerns. Staff who are new to the school know the policy, but training for staff who work outside the classroom is limited. Pupils are frequently reminded that they should always go to adults if they are worried, and the very good relationships in the school mean that pupils feel that there is someone on the staff that they can trust.
31. Targets for learning have only fairly recently been introduced throughout the school. Pupils have a fairly clear idea what their targets are, but there is scope to involve them more in their learning and in the formation of personal targets so that the targets have more impact on learning. The school council is well established. It is being further developed, with councillors being given additional training in order to increase the independence given to the council.
32. The drive to improve attendance in conjunction with the educational welfare officer appears to be working well. Initiatives to improve the behaviour at lunchtime of the oldest boys have been well thought out, but it is still too early to assess their impact. Pupils whose behaviour at times can be very difficult are managed particularly well by some staff.
33. Children entering the Nursery are very well supported by the very good relationships and caring adults. The close liaison between the pre-school group and the Reception class means that children quickly settle into school. Arrangements for travellers and pupils joining the school at other times are good and very flexible. The school goes to great lengths to give pupils additional support to ensure that they settle well.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a very good partnership with parents, the community and other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very positive in their views.
- The school is a very good resource for the community.
- Links with other schools greatly enhance the curriculum.

Commentary

34. The school has strengthened its partnerships since the previous inspection, and relationships with parents are very good. Parents are very satisfied with all that the school provides. The school helps parents with this by giving them information about the curriculum on a very regular basis. This gives parents some idea of the work children will be doing, but it could be developed further to tell parents more clearly how they can help at home. The school has already run a maths workshop to help parents understand how the subject is taught and how they can help. The numbers attending were fairly small and therefore its impact was limited, but the school intends to run further workshops on other subjects.
35. There is frequent information for parents which keeps them well informed about what is happening in school. The governors' annual report to parents has been revamped and is now very attractive and very readable. Pupil annual reports are not always clear about the progress pupils have made, and targets tend to be about attitudes to work rather than targets for learning.
36. The Parents, Friends and Teachers' Association (PFTA) is very active and organises many social occasions, which are enjoyed by all its participants. Some of the money raised is used well to provide a budget for the school council. Parents also enjoy assemblies and events and these are well attended.
37. The school's relationship with parents informs parents' very positive views and this in turn helps pupils to feel very positive about school.
38. The school uses the specialist expertise and resources from other schools to very effectively support the curriculum; for example, the teaching of French and Spanish. It works closely with the in-school pre-school group on curricular issues and has adapted its curriculum in the light of this. Students come from various educational institutions for training and work experience. There is good support from other schools for initiatives such as book week. These links enliven the curriculum and support pupils' personal development very well.
39. The school makes very good use of the community as a resource. A good example of this is the forthcoming venture in which the school is joining with other schools to use the local theatre to produce a talent show. In conjunction with a local college, the school provides computer courses for residents of a nearby home, local people and parents. In this it acts as a very good resource for the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The acting headteacher provides very good leadership for the school. The school is well managed. The governance of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher has led the school very well through a time of transition.
- Although almost all subject leaders are new, they lead their subjects well.
- The governing body provides very effective governance for the school.

Commentary

40. At the time of the inspection, an acting headteacher had been leading the school for just over a term. It was a time of considerable change, with four new members of staff (out of six classes) the previous term, compounded by the acting deputy headteacher being absent with a long-term illness, and so requiring a fifth new teacher. The acting headteacher was providing very good leadership in these potentially difficult circumstances. The way she had held the school together, and had already instituted many improvements and created an enthusiastic team with a clear educational direction, was very impressive indeed. It was even more impressive that she had done this without the support of an acting deputy. Leadership is stronger than at the time of the previous inspection.
41. Because so many teachers were new to the school at the time of the inspection, almost all the subject leaders were new to their posts. However, they were already providing good leadership with a clear sense of direction. The management of English and mathematics is good, with effective use of assessment data to track pupils' progress and to focus teaching and resources. The use of assessment data is not so well developed in other subjects. There is very good leadership and management of the Foundation Stage, with a particularly clear direction and very effective use of data in planning. The leadership of special educational needs is good. The SENCO has revised the information relating to identified pupils in a form that is easily accessible for all concerned and which demonstrates clearly the progress that each pupil has made towards the targets set. She has a firm understanding of both the strengths of the school's provision and the areas which require further development; for instance, the need to improve the quality of individual education plans to ensure greater consistency.
42. There is a very positive approach to staff development, clearly linked to an analysis of needs and the school's priorities. New staff have been supported very well and enabled to make a very effective contribution to the development of the school. Performance management is used effectively to set and track targets.
43. In managing the school's finances, the governing body has found it difficult to plan effectively for the future, partly because of wide fluctuations in the number of pupils and partly because they have not found the budget projections from the local education authority always to be helpful. The number of teachers was reduced in September, and then increased again in January. Such changes are not helpful to the school, but will continue unless a wider margin of change is allowed for with the projections. Within this overall projection, finances are managed well and linked effectively to the school's development plan.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	457,277
Total expenditure	444,277
Expenditure per pupil	3,151

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	1,785
Balance carried forward to the next year	14,785

44. The governance of the school is very good. The governing body is very well led, and has a particularly good overview of the school. There is a clear vision for the future and an informed understanding of the school's strengths and needs. The governing body has provided very good support for the acting headteacher through the transition period. There has also been very good support from the local education authority and a helpful network of schools.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Reception class is very good and has improved since the previous inspection. On entry to Reception the attainment of the majority of children is well below that normally expected for children of this age, with the exception of their physical and creative development.

During the Reception Year, children make very good progress. The majority of children are on track to achieve their early learning goals in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. Teaching and learning are consistently very good, leading to very good achievement. All staff provide very good role models, and consequently, behaviour and children's attitudes to their work are very good. Leadership is very good, with particular strengths in assessment, and has established a highly effective and committed team, a very secure learning environment, and an effective curriculum which is effectively delivered and carefully tracked. Resources are good and accommodation overall is satisfactory, although the outside play area is rather cramped.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships in the class are very good because of the high-quality role models of staff.
- There are very good opportunities for children to develop independence.

Commentary

45. Teaching in PSE is very good and children achieve very well and are on track to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the Reception Year. Staff respect children and provide very good examples of how to behave. This creates trust and very good interaction. The very good opportunities for independent choice during child-initiated activity leads to very good personal autonomy and high-quality opportunities for social development. This promotes children's confidence and self-esteem. Consequently, children achieve well, are busy and happy in school and thoroughly enjoy their learning activities. This was particularly apparent in their early morning breakfast club where they discussed their reading experiences whilst enjoying toast and soft drinks.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Phonic skills are taught well, leading to very good achievement in early reading skills.
- The range of learning activities for this area is very good and promotes high levels of interest and enthusiasm.

Commentary

46. Teaching is very good and children achieve very well in this area. On entry to the Reception class, listening skills are generally very low. The very good focus on listening carefully and the provision of speaking opportunities are effective in enabling children to develop very well and learn to express their thoughts and ideas. The emphasis on the teaching of phonics promotes confidence and joy in reading and books. This was evident at their breakfast reading session.

The wide range of activities provided ensures that all aspects of this area of learning are very well provided for.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well in their counting and shape and space activities.
- Practical activities enable children to develop their mathematical understanding very well.
- Adults effectively encourage children to talk about their learning and to use correct mathematical vocabulary.

Commentary

47. Very good teaching ensures that children achieve very well, and most are on target to attain the expected targets by the time they enter Year 1. Children achieve very well in their counting activities that are a regular part of everyday life and are used in many activities such as physical education. Good practical sessions in number and in shape and space enable children to practise and improve their skills so that most can count to ten forwards and backwards. They enjoy singing mathematical songs to aid their learning in this area. They are also able to count and relate number to objects. The organisation of mathematical development is very good. Children are comfortable in their surroundings and all eagerly contribute to the practical activities provided. Resources are good and children handle them and use the appropriate vocabulary on a daily basis. This impacts positively on their learning.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good, probing questioning helps children to think carefully about their tasks and helps to contribute well to language skills.
- The very good practical approaches allow children to find answers and solve problems.
- A good range of resources is used effectively to support scientific learning.

Commentary

48. Teaching is very good and children make good gains in their learning in this area so that most are expected to achieve the early learning goals by the end of Reception Year. This is very good achievement. A significant feature in the success of lessons is the very good questioning of adults, which helps children to think carefully about their work. Teachers also encourage children to talk about their ideas and use appropriate language, such as forces, push and pull. The practical approach of using toys and outdoor equipment provides opportunities for children to investigate and find things out for themselves. Resources are good and are used well.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy physical activities.
- Good use is made of the school hall to supplement the cramped outdoor play area.

Commentary

49. Teaching is very good overall. Consequently children achieve well and show a good understanding of the importance of exercise. They enjoy physical activities and show very good awareness of others, share resources and work well together. The outdoor area is rather cramped and does not give sufficient scope for more vigorous play or the use of wheeled toys. However, good use is made of other areas such as the hall, and the majority of children are expected to achieve the early learning goals in this area by the time they leave Reception.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good range of activities promotes very good creative and artistic skills.
- Resources are used well to develop children's talents.

Commentary

50. Teaching in creative development is very good, leading to good achievement, and most children are on track to achieve the early learning goals in this area by the end of the Reception Year. Children benefit from a wide range of resources, which they use in drawing, painting, sticking and sewing activities. They sing daily, linked to other areas of learning such as mathematics, and they achieve well. They sing well and with a high level of enjoyment.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall, but varies across the school.
- There are some effective methods for the teaching of writing, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- Achievement in speaking and listening is not as good as in reading and writing.
- The range of literature available and the focus on reading are limited in Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

51. Standards of attainment have improved since the previous inspection, and by the end of Year 6, standards are below the national average but above the average of similar schools. These standards are higher than the school's scores in national tests in 2004. Standards are lower in Year 2 than the 2004 national test scores because the starting point of this particular year group was lower, and a higher-than-usual number of pupils have special educational needs. The subject leader was absent during the inspection, but leadership has been good.

Speaking and listening

52. Standards of speaking are lower than those in reading and writing and are generally well below those usually found, although a number of pupils are articulate and speak fluently. Standards of listening are higher, and most pupils are attentive. The teaching of these aspects varies across this school, with some classes creating good opportunities for pupils to engage in paired and group discussions or to take part in role-play; for example, a Year 1 lesson used both talking partners and 'hotseating', where the teacher took the role of a character from a book and the pupils asked her questions. In some lessons, there are opportunities for pupils to give more detailed explanations of their work or to evaluate others. However, in many lessons, such opportunities are too limited, and pupils are mainly restricted to giving simple answers to teachers' questions. These lessons do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to develop the speaking and listening skills that underpin writing and progress in other subjects.

Reading

53. Standards of reading are generally below the national average across the school. However, this is good achievement for the pupils taking account of their starting point, and particularly good achievement by Year 2. The teaching of reading is particularly good in Years 1 and 2 where pupils are heard read individually and in groups. Elsewhere in the school the range of literature available is rather limited and the amount of time allocated to the teaching of reading is not always sufficient for all pupils to continue the very rapid progress they make in Years 1 and 2. Few Years 3 to 6 classes arrange extra reading sessions outside of the literacy hour, and support staff are not always allocated to maximise adult input into groups. The school is aware of these issues and has plans to change provision in these respects. However, there is some very good work within the literacy hour that helps pupils understand specific literary devices; for example, a Year 5 lesson focused well on the way in which the poet Benjamin Zephaniah used words and rhythms to create the effect he wanted. The breakfast book club is an exciting way to involve pupils in reading outside of the classroom context and is having a good impact on those who attend.

Writing

54. Standards of writing are slightly below the national average by the end of Year 6 and represent good achievement. However, a fairly high number of older pupils still have problems with some simple spellings and sentence structures. Knowledge of phonetics is generally good, and most mistakes are phonetically correct. The teaching of writing is generally good across the school, and there are some very good techniques in use; for example, a very good Year 2 lesson used a poem where initial sounds had been changed ("Wally the wotten weptile") as an enjoyable way to explore the impact of letter sounds and alliteration in poetry. Pupils were then able to incorporate these features into their writing. Many opportunities are created for pupils to write in a variety of contexts and styles, such as letters, poems, accounts and stories. There are few occasions on which pupils are asked to redraft and improve their writing in terms of its quality and clarity, rather than to correct errors.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. There is good use of other subjects such as history to extend reading and writing skills. Pupils make good use of ICT and the Internet to find information. The library is well stocked, but few classes make extensive use of this facility for independent research or browsing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.

- Pupils display very positive attitudes towards their work.
- The leadership and management of the subject are effective.
- Assessment procedures are well established and used effectively to set targets to improve pupil learning.

Commentary

56. Standards in mathematics in Year 2 are average whilst those in Year 6 are close to the average. The work seen during the inspection indicates that achievement is good overall. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
57. Pupils achieve well because activities are often practical and made exciting by some teachers. The pupils benefit from the good levels of support in lessons. The support staff are sensitive in their approach to less able pupils and use probing questions to help them to understand the ideas being taught, as well as promoting confidence and self-esteem. This enables them to overcome quickly any difficulties and make good gains in their learning. For example, Year 1 pupils worked confidently relating solid shapes to pictures, and Year 2 pupils used previous knowledge well to solve mathematical puzzles.
58. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers across the school are developing pupils' number skills well, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Lessons are well planned, leading to very well managed learning. The major strengths in teaching include informative and lively introductions to lessons, although in some instances they can be overlong, thus reducing the time on task. Activities are generally well structured and extend the pupils' understanding and learning effectively. Explanations are clear, and appropriate discussions involve probing questioning that challenges pupils' thinking. Practical activities are purposeful, and encourage pupils to think about what they have learnt. Assessment of pupils' achievements is good, helping teachers to plan tasks that are relevant to each group's ability.
59. Leadership in mathematics is good. The newly appointed co-ordinator has spent some time gathering data in order that he may have a clear overview of provision. He ensures that the subject has a high profile and acknowledges what needs to be done to raise standards. Provision since the last inspection presents a similar picture overall, with standards below the average by Year 6. Resources are good and have a positive impact on learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

60. Numeracy skills are used satisfactorily across other subjects, such as science, information and communication technology and design and technology. There is scope for further use in order to improve standards and extend their computational skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in developing both scientific knowledge and skills.
- Attainment currently is below average in Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils enjoy science and often demonstrate very good behaviour and good attitudes.
- Leadership of science is good.

Commentary

61. In the past five years, the school's results in Year 6 have declined from above average in 2000 to below average in 2004. Current Year 6 pupils are achieving well, although their attainment is below average. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Years 4 and 5 are

making rapid progress, and their attainment is currently between average and above average. In Years 1 and 2, current pupils' attainment is below average but achievement is good. Pupils' progress and the quality of teaching have both improved in Years 1 and 2; they are both now good. Significant recent improvements have been made in the provision in science, and achievement is now good.

62. Teaching is good. Good balance is given to the development of pupils' scientific skills and their subject knowledge. However, the recent improvement in provision has not yet had time to result in high levels of skills in scientific investigative work by Year 6, as pupils do not plan investigations in detail to answer scientific questions they have raised. These skills are developing well in Years 4 and 5. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs. Good use is made of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, with extensive recording of work, often in a structured report format, and measuring of results of experiments from as early as Year 1. Systems to identify and record how well pupils are doing in gaining both scientific knowledge and skills are satisfactory and being extended. The curriculum is based on commercial guidance and gives good emphasis to the development of skills.
63. Pupils generally behave very well and show good levels of interest, and these positive attitudes aid learning. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed investigating how various forces affected the flight of different designs of paper aeroplanes, while those in Year 5 discussed sensibly why the bounce of a ball dropped onto the same or different surfaces may have changed. In Year 1, pupils made good progress in extending their knowledge of forces and how to ensure a test is fair.
64. Science is well led. The subject leader has introduced a range of improvements since September and acts as a very good role model in her teaching of science and her enthusiasm for the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and attain average standards.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good.
- The quality of teaching and leadership of the subject are good.
- ICT is used well to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

65. Standards of attainment in ICT are similar to those expected nationally in Years 2 and 6. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in learning and achieve well because of improvements in resources. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection, which criticised both provision and resourcing in ICT as well as the standards pupils attained, which were then in line with national expectations in Year 2 but below in Year 6. The school has invested in a well-resourced ICT suite, which is used very effectively, and the school has made sure that the teaching of ICT skills is associated with learning in other subjects. The quality of teaching is good. Planning is good and tasks are clearly explained. Teachers are confident in using the technology available. The suite is used well for both class teaching and the support of small groups or individuals, such as pupils with special educational needs or traveller pupils. Pupils behave very sensibly and are very enthusiastic about using computers, working together very well when sharing the use of a computer.
66. The school's use of national guidance as the basis for planning has ensured that pupils have regular opportunities to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding of ICT. Pupils

develop a range of skills to enable them to use ICT to enhance their learning in other subjects. In Year 2, for instance, pupils successfully used a program to develop a branching identification tree, which supported learning in science and mathematics. In Years 3 and 4, pupils completed and sent e-mails in response to ones received from a partner school. In both these lessons, pupils' keyboard skills were rather slow. Pupils in Year 6 explored the Internet to find information about Britain since 1948, which supports a history topic, and this is to be developed into a multimedia presentation.

67. Although good use is made of the ICT suite, few computers are available in classrooms and little use of these was seen during the inspection. After-school ICT clubs are available for infant and junior pupils. Leadership of the subject has been good and resulted in the improvements made. A new system to identify how well pupils are developing their skills has been introduced. This includes opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

68. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good because of the close link between the teaching of ICT and its support for other subjects. ICT is used regularly to help develop English and mathematics skills. In Year 2, pupils used ICT well to write about their feelings. A range of art programs is used effectively; for instance, to produce self-portraits and to explore symmetry. Year 1 pupils produced pictures of characters, such as 'The Ugly Duckling' and 'Cinderella', which arose from their work in English. In mathematics, pupils produce bar charts of data, such as about pupils' favourite drinks and foods. Year 5 pupils used ICT very effectively to incorporate text, varying size and font, with illustrations to produce newspaper-style reports.

HUMANITIES

It was not possible to see any lessons in geography, and too few lessons were seen in history for an overall judgement to be made.

History

69. Many lessons take an exciting, practical approach to history that enthuses the pupils and helps develop their understanding. For example, pupils in Year 1 dressed up in old-fashioned clothes to re-enact a visit to a beach in the 1920s, and Year 2 pupils wrote with quill pens when finding out about Samuel Pepys. There was high challenge in a Year 5 lesson where pupils were studying the ancient civilisations of the Indus Valley and had to review and assess the evidence that exists about the period. There were some very good techniques for involving pupils actively in the review and a high degree of intellectual challenge.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

It was not possible to see sufficient lessons in PE, art and design, music or design and technology to make any overall judgement about the quality of provision.

Music

70. The school ensures that National Curriculum requirements are met in music and that pupils are introduced to music from a range of cultures. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 learn to play the recorder. Pupils sing enthusiastically and tunefully in assembly where they are well supported by older pupils playing recorders and a range of percussion instruments. A range of extra-curricular opportunities is available for pupils to learn to play instruments and to join the percussion band.

Physical education

71. An improved commercial scheme is in use in PE, and this ensures progression in the development of physical skills. In the lessons observed, Year 2 pupils made very good

progress in improving their throwing and catching skills because of very effective teaching. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to be involved in extra-curricular sport.

Art and design

72. The one art and design lesson observed focused on pupils arranging their own composition of objects for still life. Pupils drew their rough sketches in pencil before completing it in charcoal, recognising and interpreting light and dark. Good examples of links with other subjects were models of a Roman soldier and a Celtic warrior. They studied and produced sculptures and collages in the style of Andy Goldsworthy and used local artists to improve their understanding, knowledge and skills. A traveller grandmother taught pupils how to make traditional flowers and the whole school paid a visit to the Walker Art Gallery. Art and design has a high profile in the school and teachers take great care in presenting pupils' work to create a stimulating and attractive environment.

Design and technology

73. No lessons were observed in design and technology but portfolios of work, photographs and documents were analysed, indicating that attainment is generally satisfactory. Cardboard models representing a focus on 'Fire-fighters' are realistic and interest and motivate pupils. Year 6 pupils took part in a tetrahedron challenge and when each group had completed their tetrahedron, they were joined together. As part of their food technology programme, Years 3, 4 and 5 pupils designed, prepared and served sandwiches for visitors who had been invited to school for an artwork exhibition. In the work analysed, there was clear evidence of planning and designing, use of tools and various methods of fixing.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	4
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	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

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

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