

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOSEPH'S WASHINGTON RC SCHOOL

Washington

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 108850

Headteacher: Mr D Wright

Lead inspector: Mr A Margerison

Dates of inspection: 4 – 6 July 2005

Inspection number: 267841

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 to 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 294.5

School address: Village Lane
Washington
Tyne and Wear
Postcode: NE38 7HU

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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr E Moran

Date of previous inspection: 26 April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School serves the parish of Our Lady in Washington Village. The school mainly serves the village although a few parents choose to bring their children to the school from the neighbouring area because of the Catholic education it provides. The village is made up of a mix of private and rented housing. Although pupils' backgrounds vary, overall their socio-economic circumstances are broadly average. The school is bigger than most primary schools and currently has 314 pupils on roll aged from three to 11 years including 39 children who attend the nursery on a part-time basis. Very few children join or leave the school during the school year. When children start school, although their attainment varies, baseline assessment shows that attainment is in line with that expected. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, mainly for moderate learning difficulties, is below average. Currently, there are three pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need. However, the school is catering for more pupils with special educational needs lower down the school than it has in the past including several with specific learning difficulties. In Year 2, more than 20 per cent of pupils have identified special educational needs. The majority of pupils are of white, British origin, but there are a few pupils from mixed and Asian backgrounds. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English or have English as an additional language. Since the last inspection, the school has had significant changes in staffing, all for good reasons, including senior managers. The school was awarded the School Achievement Award in 2003 and is involved in the Sport Co-ordinator programme.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21666	Mr A Margerison	Lead inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs English as an additional language
32678	Mrs K Dodd	Lay inspector	
19709	Mrs J Fisher	Team inspector	Science Art and design Music The Foundation Stage
33147	Mr T Nelson	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Joseph's RC Primary School is an effective school with many very good features and it provides good value for money. Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching. The very effective leadership by the headteacher has ensured that standards in Year 6 have been consistently well above the national average in recent years.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well to reach good standards overall by Year 6. Standards in English and science are very high.
- Relationships between pupils and with adults are excellent.
- The use of assessment information is not consistently rigorous in all subjects, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers' use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons is very good.
- The targets in subject leaders' action plans are not focussed enough to easily evaluate their effect.
- The school has established very good links with the community and with other schools.
- Activities in all subjects are not used effectively enough to develop pupils' mathematical skills.
- The range of extra activities in sports is very good.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. No major issues were identified in the report, but the school has successfully kept pace with changing national expectations so that most of the strengths identified in the report have been maintained. The one minor area linked to physical education has improved well. In addition, provision for ICT and additional activities, particularly in sports has improved very well. However, standards in mathematics are not as high.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well due to good support in lessons. Children achieve well in Reception so that overall standards by the end of the year are likely to be in line with those expected. In their personal, social and emotional development children achieve very well to reach very good standards. In their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development standards are above those expected. In their mathematical development and communication, language and literacy skills, children achieve satisfactorily, so that standards are in line with those expected.

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

*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.*

The trend in the school's results in national tests in Years 2 and 6 has been below the national pattern in recent years. This was reflected in the 2004 results for pupils in Year 2 when they were below average in reading compared with all schools and with similar schools. Standards in writing were above average and average in mathematics when compared with all schools and above average in both subjects when compared to similar schools. Inspection evidence shows that current pupils in Year 2 are achieving well in all subjects except mathematics, where achievement is satisfactory. As a result, standards overall are above those expected in reading, writing, speaking and listening, science and ICT, with all pupils except those with special educational needs working securely at the expected level or above. Standards in mathematics are satisfactory. The Year 6 results of statutory tests in 2004 show a wide variation between subjects. The mathematics results were well below average when compared with similar schools, but average when compared with all schools. Inspection evidence shows that this pattern is continuing this year, with pupils achieving well to reach standards in English and science well above those expected. In mathematics, standards and achievement are satisfactory. In ICT, pupils are achieving well to reach standards above those expected.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development, are very good. Their cultural development is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is above average and pupils' punctuality to school is good. Relationships between pupils are excellent and the school deals very well with all forms of harassment or disharmony.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. A significant proportion of teaching is very good. Teaching and learning in Nursery and Reception are good because teachers have good subject knowledge and use it effectively to plan a good range of activities that enthuse children, leading to a good pace in learning. Throughout the school, teachers use questions and ICT resources very well in lessons and are very consistent in their expectations of pupils. Support staff are used effectively to work with pupils with special educational needs so they are fully involved in lessons and achieve well. Assessment procedures in English are good and the information is used well to set targets for pupils and to track their progress. However, this is not the case in other subjects, particularly in mathematics. The curriculum is well enhanced by activities out of lessons, particularly in sports, so those pupils with particular interests are able to develop and extend their skills. Links between subjects are exploited effectively to develop pupils' ICT and literacy skills, but pupils have fewer opportunities to use their numeracy skills. This affects their capacity to apply their basic number knowledge to solve problems and present information. Links with other schools and the community are very good and have a very positive effect on the pace of pupils' learning. Procedures for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Good procedures to support and guide pupils are based on the excellent relationships between pupils and adults. The school has established good links with parents based on very good procedures to deal with any concerns parents may have.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management is good. The headteacher leads the school very effectively with a very clear view for the future based on very good procedures to monitor the work of the school. He is very well supported by the deputy headteacher who has had a significant effect on the school in a very short time. Overall, subject leaders lead their subjects well. Their action plans reflect the school's priorities, but the targets are not sufficiently focussed

to guide their action or to evaluate the effectiveness of their work. Governors are very committed and, in a short time, have established a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the challenges it faces. They ensure that the school meets its statutory duties well.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the school in very high regard and are very confident that their children will receive a good education based on Catholic moral principles. Pupils also have very positive views of their school and are very keen to take an active part in their school and its development.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Extend the good assessment procedures in English to other subjects, particularly mathematics.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Develop subject leaders' action plans so the targets are clearly focussed on specific aspects of school improvement, and are easily evaluated.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The overall achievement of pupils is good as they move through the school. Children achieve well in Nursery and Reception to reach standards at least in line with those expected. As they move through the school, pupils continue to achieve well and attain good standards overall in Years 2 and 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English and science are very good in Year 6.
- Children in Nursery and Reception achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development, but their achievement in language, literacy and mathematical development is not as good.
- Pupils' ability to apply their knowledge and skills in mathematics is not as well developed as other aspects of the subject.
- Despite rapid changes in national expectations and technology, standards and achievement in ICT have continued to be good since the last inspection.

Commentary

1. When children start school in nursery, they have skills broadly typical for their age. Their secure personal development enables them to settle quickly into school so teachers can get on with developing their knowledge and understanding. During their first two years at school, they achieve well overall, but there are variations across the different areas of learning. Teachers are very consistent in their expectations of behaviour and establish very good relationships with children. They also give children plenty of opportunities to work on their own and with other children. As a result, children achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development and the great majority will easily exceed the expected levels for their age in this area of learning by the end of Reception. In their knowledge and understanding of the world, and their creative and physical development, children achieve well and most will exceed the expected levels. This is mainly due to teachers' planning which provides children with a wide range of interesting and exciting activities that capture their interest and stimulate in them a strong desire to learn. Children's achievement in their communication, language, literacy and mathematical development is satisfactory so that standards are in line with those expected at the end of reception. Children's basic language, reading and number skills are good, but their writing and calculation skills are not as strong, although they are line with those expected.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.5 (15.8)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.4 (14.5)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.8 (16.2)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 42 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The trend in the school's result for pupils in the Year 2 national tests has been falling in recent years compared with the national pattern. In 2004, the results in writing were above average when compared to all schools and average in mathematics. They were above average in comparison with similar schools. However, in reading the results were below average when

compared with all schools and with similar schools. The main reason for this was the lower proportion of pupils who reached the expected level in reading than in writing or mathematics, and simply reflects variation in year groups and the gradually changing nature of the school as more pupils with special educational needs are identified lower down the school. However, the school responded positively to these results, by strengthening the Year 2 team by moving a very skilled and experienced teacher into the year group this year. Inspection evidence indicates that this has had a positive effect and, despite this group having nearly a quarter of pupils with significant special educational needs, the results are likely to be better overall this year than last. This is because all the teachers involved place a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic language, literacy and number skills so that all those pupils who do not have special educational needs are working at the expected levels or above. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving well so that even a few of the pupils who find learning difficult are working at the expected levels despite their difficulties. In addition, the proportion of pupils working at the higher than expected level in reading and mathematics is above average. Overall, pupils achieve well to reach good standards in reading and speaking and listening. Achievement in writing and mathematics is satisfactory, although it is good in number skills, so that standards are in line with those expected. Due to a strong emphasis the teachers place on practical activities, standards and pupils' achievement in science and ICT are good with most pupils working at the expected levels.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.1 (30.9)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.2 (29.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	29.6 (29.8)	28.6 (28.6)

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

3. The school's results in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 has been consistently well above average in English and mathematics in recent years and above average in science. In 2003, the results in English placed the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. In 2004, the school's results were above average in English and science but average in mathematics when compared with all schools. When compared with similar schools, the results were average in English and slightly below average in science. However, they were well below average in mathematics. The disparity between standards in mathematics and English and science is due to the below average proportion of pupils reaching the higher than expected levels. In English and science, the proportion was above average. Due to the lower standards in mathematics, the trend in the school's results from 2001 to 2004 was below the national pattern and the value the school added to attainment of pupils in the 2004 group was below average. The school recognised that this situation demanded urgent action and identified several appropriate strategies to raise standards. However, for a number of valid reasons, primarily absence from school of the subject leader due to illness, the school has not been able to implement these ideas fully this year and inspection evidence shows that the disparity between the three subjects is continuing. In English, pupils are achieving well to reach very good standards overall. In speaking, listening and reading, standards are very good and in writing are above those expected. In science, achievement is good and standards are well above those expected. These high standards reflect the strong emphasis teachers in Years 3 to 6 place on providing pupils with plenty of opportunities to conduct investigations, take on

individual pieces of research, to discuss what they are doing and to write up their work in their own words. As a result, pupils' formal report and factual writing is particularly good. However, in mathematics, standards and achievement are satisfactory. Pupils develop good number and computation skills, but their ability to apply these skills is not as good as is normally seen. This partly reflects the fewer opportunities pupils have in other subjects to practise and use them in a variety of contexts. In ICT, pupils achieve well to reach standards that are above those normally seen.

4. In the current Year 6 group, there are not many pupils with special educational needs. However, due to very good specialist teaching and effective support in lessons, they have achieved well in Years 3 to 6. Their achievement has been very good in reading, where they have made significantly more progress than the rest of their group so that at least three out of the seven pupils are working at the expected level for their age. In the national tests for pupils in Year 2, girls have attained better than boys have in recent years. However, this difference is not apparent in the Year 6 tests. During the inspection, there was no evidence that girls and boys are currently achieving differently from each other. The school does not have any pupils for whom English is an additional language, but there are a few pupils from mixed and Asian backgrounds. These pupils are fully included in the school and achieve as well their classmates.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal qualities are very good. Pupils' attendance is above average and their punctuality to school is good. They have very positive attitudes to school and behave very well. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. Their cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between pupils are excellent.
- The school has very high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct so they develop a very clear understanding of what is right and wrong.
- The school has very good procedures to deal with any incidents of discord between pupils.
- Pupils' develop a very high respect for the opinions and feelings of others.
- Pupils' understanding of their own cultural traditions are very good, but the provision to enable pupils to develop a secure understanding of how faith or beliefs affect the daily lives of other cultures is not as strong.
- Pupils are very willing to take advantage of everything that is provided for them and develop a very keen desire to learn.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.9	School data	0.1
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.

5. Attendance has improved since the last inspection as result of the school's good encouragement of parents and the procedures to raise pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance. Parents report that their children want to come to school and they are encouraged to attend by a reward system of certificates and gifts. However, pupils really enjoy school and want to be there. They are very willing to take on responsibilities and develop a very strong desire to learn and take part in anything the school has to offer. As a result, their attendance is above average and pupils' punctuality is good. Overall, the school receives good support from parents, the great majority of whom ensure that their children miss as little school time as possible. However, despite the sound systems and procedures to manage and monitor

attendance, a number of parents take their children on holiday during term time. This has been identified by the school in its latest self-evaluation documentation as an area for action.

6. The school promotes pupils' personal development, their attitudes to learning and behaviour very well. Governors see this aspect of the school's work, evaluated as very good at the last inspection, as a reflection of the Catholic traditions of the school based on promoting very strong moral values. The foundation for this is the very high expectations all adults have of pupils in the way they conduct themselves around school and in lessons so that pupils develop a very good understanding of what is right and wrong. Behaviour codes and rules are agreed by each class and prominently displayed in classrooms. Teachers and adults consistently reinforce these expectations so that pupils are clear about the consequences if they break the codes of behaviour and know that they will be followed through when necessary. However, because pupils are involved in lessons very well and given plenty of opportunities to contribute, they are motivated to behave very well and rarely challenge the adults or behave inappropriately. This is also reflected in the fact that there have been no exclusions in recent years.
7. The school also promotes pupils' social skills very effectively. As a result, relationships between pupils are excellent and these make a major contribution to the very positive atmosphere seen throughout the school, in lessons, in the dining hall and in the playground. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in discussions and to work with each other in lessons and teachers clearly outline how they expect pupils to respond. As a result, pupils learn to share their ideas, and to respect the views and opinions of others and there is an almost total absence of bullying or harassment. Neither parents nor pupils expressed any concerns about this in the discussions held with them or through the questionnaires they completed before the inspection. However, parents are also very confident that if there are any incidents of argument or discord between pupils they will be dealt with very quickly and effectively by the headteacher. The school promotes very well pupils' understanding of their responsibilities to each other and the wider community through the range of opportunities they have to take on responsibilities around school. For example, older pupils help to run the library and staff the school office at lunchtime. There are very good opportunities for older children to work alongside younger ones in house group discussions, the views of the school council are taken seriously by school managers and there are very good opportunities for pupils to be involved in, and to organise, charitable fundraising efforts.
8. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted very effectively through the very good opportunities they have to think deeply about what they can do to have a positive effect on the lives of others around the world. In lessons and assemblies, pupils are encouraged to reflect about world issues such as poverty and on how this compares to their lives. Pupils are also encouraged to think deeply about the meanings of what they are working on and to help them appreciate the beauty of the world around them, such as the sunrise. Books are used well in lessons to teach pupils about different cultures, faiths and traditions from around the world and how these peoples' lives differ from their own. The school makes very good use of the local area to promote pupils' awareness of their own cultural traditions through visiting authors and visits to places of historical interest in the locality, such as Washington Old Hall. However, the school does not have a whole school plan to promote pupils' understanding of the different ethnic communities present in modern Britain. They learn about the religious festivals and key beliefs of the major world faiths, but they have relatively few opportunities to learn about the daily lives of people from the diverse cultures that are part of modern British society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. The good curriculum is very well enhanced by visits and visitors and sporting activities out of lessons. Procedures to ensure the health, safety, care and wellbeing of pupils are very good. The school has established very good links with the community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- Teachers use questions and ICT resources very well to encourage pupils to take part in lessons.
- Ending sessions are not always used well enough to involve pupils in evaluating their own learning.
- Assessment information is not used rigorously enough in all subjects to set targets for pupils.
- Pupils are well supported by teaching assistants.
- Pupils have many opportunities to work on their own and in small groups.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons

Please note: grades subject to confirmation

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	13 (33%)	16 (41%)	9 (23%)	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.

9. Overall, teaching and learning are good. A substantial amount of teaching seen during the inspection was very good. The quality of teaching is generally consistent throughout the school and examples of very good teaching were seen in most year groups.
10. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. It is particularly effective in the nursery where the teacher uses her extensive experience of teaching young children to provide a broad range of interesting and exciting activities that stimulate the children to learn. However, in both Nursery and Reception the main strengths of the teaching are the very high expectations of children's behaviour, so they develop a very clear understanding of what is expected of them. This makes a very significant contribution to children's achievement in their personal and social development. Children's very good behaviour sets the foundation for teachers to build on their skills in the other areas of learning. They use class discussions and questions very effectively to involve children in lessons and to stimulate their spoken language. Allied to their very good use of the resources available to them, children become very interested in learning and develop their skills well. They become confident, independent learners as well as being very good at working with each other.
11. Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is underpinned by the same key strengths. Pupils respond very well to teachers' very high expectations of behaviour so that lessons are orderly and productive learning experiences. The very good behaviour enables teachers to concentrate on developing pupils' learning rather than dealing with interruptions. Occasionally, a few pupils lower down the school are impatient and shout out, but even here the teacher and teaching assistants work very well together to deal with these interruptions, so the pace of the lesson is not affected significantly. This close teamwork between support staff and teachers is a good feature of many lessons and

makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. The school has an increasing proportion of pupils with specific and potentially challenging special educational needs, but staff have been very proactive in learning from outside agencies and other schools on how to cater for these pupils. As a result, they achieve well despite their problems. In addition, when pupils are withdrawn from classes to work with a specialist teacher of special educational needs, they benefit from very effective teaching that reinforces their basic literacy

skills very well. The very good progress of pupils with special educational needs in reading reflects the quality of this work. However, support staff also make a very valuable contribution to all pupils' learning in many lessons. For example, a skilled support assistant takes groups of pupils for lessons in art and design and design and technology in Years 5 and 6, which are great fun and enjoyable learning experiences for pupils.

12. Most lessons start with teachers sharing the aims of the lesson with pupils so they know what they will be learning about. Teachers' very good use of questions to involve pupils in lessons and to extend their understanding is supplemented by their very effective use of interactive whiteboards, the Internet and other ICT-based tools in lessons. As a result, many lessons begin with vibrant and brisk discussions that capture pupils' interest and prepare them well for the activities that follow. In the best lessons, teachers involve pupils directly in the opening part of the lessons using techniques such as 'Talking Partners' and 'Hot seating'. These teaching methods give pupils very good opportunities to exchange their ideas with each other and to clarify their thinking. An excellent lesson in Year 2 and a very good English lesson in Year 5 both used these techniques very effectively, so pupils' learning was rapid. However, there is more scope for these approaches to be used across the school, particularly aspects of drama and role-play in lessons to stimulate pupils' imaginations and help them understand what they are learning from different perspectives. Pupils' writing, which is not as effective when they are writing creatively or imaginatively as it is when writing in a formal or narrative style, reflects this weaker aspect of their literacy skills. Follow-up activities are generally well matched to the aims of the lessons so they build and reinforce pupils' understanding well. Practical activities in science and research tasks in subjects such as history, geography and English lessons are used well to develop pupils' learning. However, in mathematics lessons, this emphasis on practical learning is not as extensive and much of the work is focused on developing pupils' basic number skills rather than moving them on when it is clear that they have grasped the idea, to applying their understanding to practical situations. This contributes to the difference between pupils' achievement in mathematics when compared with English and science.
13. The school has established good assessment procedures in English to track the progress pupils make and to set them targets to achieve. Although this is not consistently effective in all classes, it is very good in Year 2. For example, where the teacher also uses the targets well in her marking of pupils' work, the process is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils report that they know their targets in English and understand what they are aiming to learn next. However, this is not the case in mathematics where there is not a whole school system to establish targets for pupils based on the assessment information available. The subject leader and headteacher are aware of this and have plans in place to develop a similar system to English so that teachers are clear how well their pupils are progressing and have a framework upon which to base their marking of pupils' work. In addition, the closing sessions of lessons are not always used well enough to involve pupils in reviewing their learning alongside the aims of the lesson. It is done well in the best lessons, but this is not always the case across the school. As a result, pupils are not always sure how well they have done or understand what they need to work on next. In other subjects, the school is introducing systems to track pupils' progress, but in many subjects, these systems are in the early stages of development. For example, the ICT subject leader is trialling a process with his own class before setting it up across the school.

The curriculum

The curriculum and the opportunities for enrichment are good. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of activities out of lessons for pupils to take part in sport is very good.
- The accommodation and resources for ICT are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their use of all aspects of their numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Commentary

14. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully incorporated the national guidance for the teaching of literacy, numeracy and the Foundation Stage into its planning procedures. As a result, the school provides a curriculum that meets statutory requirements and provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in all the subjects of the National Curriculum. Through its personal, social and health education programme it ensures that pupils are taught the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and about issues linked to sex, drugs and alcohol education.
15. Although the teachers' planning does not consistently make strong links between subjects, pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy skills in many subjects. Teachers' expect pupils to record their own ideas, report on the findings from science investigations and to write in different formats such as letters, newspaper reports and diaries. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to use their imaginations to write from the perspective of different characters they are learning about in history or to put themselves in the position of someone from a different culture. For example, pupils in Year 2 were asked to write an account from Florence Nightingale's perspective about her journey to the Crimea, but this is a relatively infrequent example. As a result, pupils' formal and narrative writing is much more effective than their descriptive or imaginative writing. Pupils also have satisfactory opportunities to use their ICT skills, particularly in the opening parts of lessons when they often get to use the interactive whiteboards, although there are occasions when opportunities are missed to integrate computer-based work into lessons. However, there are much fewer examples of where pupils are able to use their numeracy skills to plot charts, graphs and to analyse their results from investigations or surveys. This has a direct effect on pupils' ability to use and apply their good number skills in a specific context.
16. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for throughout the school. There is an increasing number of pupils with specific and often challenging difficulties, particularly lower down the school. However, staff have made great efforts to learn about these difficulties and to develop their skills to manage the pupils well. All of the pupils with identified needs have individual plans that outline the targets set for them and what they are expected to learn. The school has recently introduced an assessment and tracking system called PIVATS. This enables teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator to monitor pupils' progress both academically and personally. As a result, overall, the targets in these plans are specific, pupils' work in their books and in lessons reflects these targets and pupils are making good progress socially and academically. Parents are generally pleased with the provision and the progress their children are making. Where pupils are withdrawn to work with a specialist teacher, they benefit from very good teaching that is highly focussed on the basic skills they need to learn. As a result, pupils with special educational needs

are very well prepared to move on to secondary school, with a very clear understanding of how they should behave and secure basic reading, writing and number skills. Although this is particularly important for these potentially more vulnerable pupils, the very close links the school has with the main secondary school that pupils move to and the frequent opportunities they have to visit the school throughout their time at St Joseph's means that all pupils are in a very good position to move on at the end of Year 6.

17. One of the strongest aspects of the curriculum is the activities before, after and during school for pupils to take part in sports of various kinds. The school is very involved in the School Sports Co-ordinator programme in conjunction with the local secondary school and has been very proactive in taking advantage of everything this scheme has to offer. As a result, pupils have opportunities to take part in activities not usually seen in primary schools. For example, a specialist coach visits once a week before school starts and takes a group for tennis. Pupils also have had the chance to work with highly talented visitors, such as an Olympic gold medallist, in school and at weekends. The link teacher from the secondary school is highly complimentary about the contribution of St Joseph's staff and pupils in the programme, noting that the number of pupils who take part in, for example, the Saturday morning hockey coaching, is particularly high. These activities have broadened the curriculum considerably for all pupils, including the younger ones, who have had coaching in gymnastics from one of the local authority's advanced skills teachers. The provision has not only made a good contribution to the personal and social development of these pupils, but has also inspired other staff to become more involved in providing after-school clubs, such as girls football. As a result, this aspect of the curriculum is much improved on that seen at the last inspection.
18. Overall, the school's accommodation and the resources available for pupils to use are good, and are very good for ICT. This example of good improvement since the last inspection reflects the headteacher's commitment to ensuring that pupils have the best the school can possibly provide. In ICT, the school has continued to develop its range of equipment and software to keep pace with the rapidly changing technology and the increasing demands of the subject. For example, the computer suite has flat-screen monitors that enable the worktop space to be used for study as well as working on the machines. Each classroom has an interactive whiteboard and although these have not been in place for long, teachers have been given good training. A great deal of use is made of them in lessons to involve pupils and to present lessons in interesting ways. Overall, the resources make a good contribution to pupils' learning in many subjects, not just ICT.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Support and guidance for pupils are good. The school has good procedures to involve pupils in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent.
- Procedures to ensure that pupils work in healthy and safe environment are very good.
- Procedures to involve pupils in setting and reviewing their own learning targets are not consistent in all subjects.
- The school council makes a very good contribution to school development.

Commentary

19. The school places a very high priority on ensuring pupils safety and well-being and has policies in place to cover all aspects of its responsibilities in this area. First aid arrangements are very good, and include the recording, storage and administration of medicines. There are good procedures to safeguard pupils' use of the Internet.

However, most importantly, the school also makes sure that its procedures and day-to-day practises reflect these policies. For example, information on child protection is included in the staff handbook and training has been held for all staff on these procedures, including mid-day supervisors. Governors have also attended child protection training and are fully involved in reviewing and completing risk assessments around school and for visits. The caretaker makes a good contribution to the school's health and safety procedures and ensures along with school managers, that any issues are dealt with promptly.

20. The very positive ethos of the school is not just reflected in the excellent relationships between pupils, but also in the quality of the relationships pupils have with adults. The quality of relationships also extends to visiting specialists and staff at the City Learning Centre that pupils visit regularly to do work in ICT. This partly reflects the good training that all staff, including mid-day supervisors have had, and that staff know the pupils and their needs very well. As a result, pupils say that they are happy there is someone to go to if they are worried. The school does not involve pupils systematically in reviewing their own progress, academically or personally, so they are not always clear about how well they are doing and what they need to work on next. Nevertheless, parents report that they are confident that their children are well supported.
21. The views of the school council are highly valued by the leadership of the school and it is taking an increasingly prominent role in its development. For example, it meets at least fortnightly and has recently been involved in reviewing the organisation of lunchtimes, the introduction of a tuck shop and taking decisions on fundraising activities. It has increased its membership this year to include pupils from most year groups, but the members recognise that the next development is to include children from the Nursery and Reception in its work.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established good links with parents. Links with the community and with other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to deal with any concerns of parents are very effective.
- Links with other schools make a very important contribution to pupils' learning and staff development.
- The systems to support the transition of pupils to secondary school are very good.
- The school makes a very good contribution to the community.

Commentary

22. The very high regard in which parents hold the school is founded on the good quality information they get about the work of the school such as the very informative newsletters and the website. The school also keeps parents informed about what the school is doing and any significant developments taking place. However, the school has identified that this could be improved further by increasing the information it gives parents about specific subjects. Although the reports parents get on their children's progress do not provide any place for the pupils themselves to comment, parents are generally happy that they know how well their children are progressing. This is mainly because parents have plenty of opportunities to discuss matters informally with teachers on a daily basis at the end of school and are very confident that the school would approach them if there were any concerns. However, the headteacher and deputy headteacher are easily accessible to parents, who feel very confident that any concerns they have will be dealt with very efficiently by school managers. Parents are generally supportive in helping their children at home with homework and they make a good contribution to school development through the active 'Friends Of St Joseph's Association.

23. Parents describe the links with the local community, particularly the parish, as very close. Community groups such as guides and brownies use the premises on a regular basis and the school enjoys a very good reputation within the locality. Active links exist with Washington FC and a good range of trips into the village area to support pupils' learning is a feature of many topics, from Reception through to Year 6. The school also exploits its strong links with community professionals, including fire and police services, and these people have been

consulted in drawing up a travel plan. However, pupils also contribute very well to the community, which promotes their understanding of the role as a citizen within it. For example, a link with a local supermarket where pupils sing carols helped raise money for a local hospice. Pupils were also involved in planting bulbs in the village in conjunction with the village association.

24. The most notable aspect of this element of the school's work is the way in which the school has established productive links with other schools. These have a very positive effect on pupils' learning and personal development on many levels. For example, very close links have been established between staff and between pupils from one of the other local Catholic primary schools. For example, the school council has taken part in video conferencing with the pupils from the other school to exchange ideas. Teaching and support staff have also visited a local special school to get help and advice on how to cater for pupils with specific special educational needs. However, the strongest links are with the local secondary school. Apart from the liaison between senior managers, special needs co-ordinators and the visits pupils make in the term before they transfer, pupils throughout their time at St Joseph's will have lots of contact with staff from the secondary school, who regularly visit for a range of different reasons. For example, staff from the school are involved in teaching pupils ICT skills when they visit the City Learning Centre, they provide specialist coaching for activities out of lessons and a teacher visits school weekly to teach older pupils French. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for transfer, both academically and personally.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher's leadership of the school is very effective. Subject leaders fulfil their roles well. The good management systems are very effective in identifying school improvement priorities. Governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher uses monitoring information very effectively as the basis for identifying school improvement priorities.
- The deputy headteacher works with a very clear sense of purpose and, in a short time, has made an important contribution to the development of the school.
- Subject leaders have clear roles and monitor their subjects well, but their action plans are not always specific enough to clearly guide their actions and to evaluate their effectiveness.
- The school has very good procedures to develop staff skills in response to new challenges and initiatives.

Commentary

25. The headteacher has continued to lead the school very effectively since the last inspection with a very clear sense of purpose and direction. As a result, the minor area for improvement identified at the last inspection has been dealt with well, standards have remained well above the national average and other areas of the school such as the provision for ICT and the accommodation, have improved significantly. This has been achieved despite considerable changes and instability in staffing and the higher expectations of schools generally. The main reason for this is the headteacher's very good use of the information he gains from monitoring lessons

and pupils' performance. This is reflected in the accuracy of his self-evaluation of the school when compared with inspection findings. There are no areas where this evaluation is significantly different, although there are slight variations. Where areas of underperformance have been identified the headteacher has implemented strategies to address them. For example, a skilled teacher was put into Year 2 to help raise standards following a couple of disappointing years in 2003 and 2004. This has had the desired effect and assessment data indicates that, except for a few pupils with special educational needs, the entire group will

reach at least the expected level for their age. Similarly effective strategies, such as target-setting, have been put into place to maintain standards in English. Although standards in mathematics in Year 6 are still lagging behind English and science, the headteacher has recognised this and the plans the school has are appropriate. When the subject leader has had the time to implement them, they should raise standards back to the point they were in 2003.

26. The headteacher has been very well supported this year by the new deputy headteacher. He has made a significant difference to the school in a very short time since his appointment in September 2004. For example, he has driven the revision of the assessment procedures and very quickly gained the respect of other members of staff through his own teaching and leadership. His enthusiasm and expertise for his subjects is infectious and he is a very good role model for pupils and staff alike. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are well supported by staff who hold key leadership roles in school. Although several have not been in post very long, they are taking an increasingly prominent role in school improvement. For example, the subject leader for ICT has taken up the challenge of developing the subject. However, it is important to note that teachers' own commitment and enthusiasm to improve their own skills, such as learning how to use the interactive whiteboards, has also been a major factor in the improvements seen in the provision. This has led to the significant improvement in the resources available for teachers as well as ensuring that their own skills are good enough to make effective use of new equipment such as the interactive whiteboards. The special educational needs co-ordinator has led the introduction of more detailed assessment of pupils' with special educational needs using PIVATS in response to the arrival of several younger pupils with specific learning difficulties. This enables her to check the progress these pupils are making and the effect of the support they are given on their learning, both academically and personally. Subject leaders for English, mathematics and science have all had opportunities to monitor teaching, look at pupils' work and teachers' planning. However, although key subject leaders and co-ordinators use assessment and monitoring information to produce action plans for their subjects, the targets in these plans are not consistently specific or clearly linked to success criteria. As a result, it is difficult for these subject leaders to prioritise their time or to measure accurately the effect of their work on standards or achievement.
27. The headteacher is well supported in the management of the school by the governors, who fulfil their statutory duties well. Although several of the governors have not been in post very long, they have taken up the challenge of the role with a great sense of purpose and enthusiasm. They have gone out of their way to take part in training provided by the local authority and to seek additional training in specific areas such as workforce reform legislation. Those governors with specific responsibilities have made links with their respective subject leaders and have spent time in classrooms taking part in lessons. As a result, of their own monitoring and the information they receive from the headteacher they have a good understanding of the strengths of the school. Their own role in school improvement planning is limited at present due to their relative inexperience in the role. However, due to their enthusiasm and rapidly increasing skills, they are well set to take an increasingly prominent role in the near future.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)	Balances (£)
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Total income	700,508
Total expenditure	648,267
Expenditure per pupil	2,204

Balance from previous year	48,458
Balance carried forward to the next	52,241

28. The governors and the headteacher ensure that financial management is good and the school makes effective use of its funds aimed at improving standards and the resources available for teachers and pupils to use. The carry over figure shown in the table above is within local authority guidelines. However, governors are very aware of the importance of getting best value from any spending and the challenges the school faces in the future in this area. For example, in the near future, there will be significant pressures upon school finances because the school roll is projected to fall in the next few years due to local demographic trends bringing with it implications for staffing.

29. The main strengths in the management of the school are linked to the collation and use of monitoring data by the headteacher to identify priorities for development. This is reflected in the fact that the identified areas for development from the inspection are enhancements on existing strategies rather than significant areas for improvement that the school was not aware of already. However, the other major area of strength in the management of the school is that managers place a very high priority on ensuring that all staff are provided with the training they need to fulfil their various roles in school. Teachers are provided with access to training to improve their skills in, for example ICT. Mid-day supervisors have been trained in child protection procedures and special educational needs, and support staff have been given plenty of training in supporting literacy teaching and specific learning difficulties. As a result, all staff are well versed in their roles and are able to fulfil their duties effectively in all aspects of their work. This good commitment to ensuring that all staff and pupils are provided with the opportunities they need to succeed is an important aspect of its very positive ethos.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

30. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. It supports children of all capabilities well and leads to good achievement in the nursery and the reception classes. Overall, children's attainment is broadly typical for their age when they start in the nursery class although the full range of ability from well above to well below average is represented. Teaching is good and the Foundation Stage leader provides good leadership to this part of the school. This is reflected in the good improvement in the provision since the last inspection, which has ensured that the school has kept pace with the new and increasing demands of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Teachers' planning is closely matched to the early learning goals and gives children plenty of opportunities to engage in a wide range of activities relevant to their needs. More effective use is made of ICT and a wider range of visits and inspirational visitors is used to enhance what is taught in school. Good systems for sharing information with parents are in place.
31. Children are taught in separate nursery and reception classes, but the school is conscious of the need to further develop the liaison between the two age groups. In September, due to a lower number of children joining the school, the organisation of the classes is changing to allow this to happen. Major strengths of the provision are the encouragement and support all children receive from the teachers and the support staff, and the caring, learning environment which enables all children to be well motivated, to have very positive attitudes and behave very well. This nurtures very effectively the mature attitude demonstrated by the very young children. The encouragement given by the adults, along with a firm, but caring manner and the effective use of a wide range of resources enables children to work purposefully and productively and to achieve well. The accommodation and resources are good, and the outside area is very well resourced.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Nursery and reception children benefit from very good teaching, well organised daily routines, and the high expectations held by staff, and achieve very well.
- Very good relationships between children and adults have been established so that children feel confident, happy and enjoy coming to school.
- Snack times are very effective social occasions, but some adults miss opportunities to extend children's speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

32. There is very good quality teaching and learning in both nursery and reception classes so children achieve very well. This area of learning is central to the work in the nursery and reception class and contributes very effectively to the children's achievements in other areas of learning. Children are very well mannered. They listen to each other, take turns and work very well without direct adult supervision.

Nursery children quickly settle into school well and very good teaching promotes independence and co-operation. Staff clearly explain the need for good behaviour, courtesy and collaboration and require children to demonstrate these qualities at all times. Children are supported very well in a safe, secure environment where they gain increasing confidence in exploring new and exciting activities. Children in the

reception class demonstrate good self-esteem and confidence. They already know the class routines well, settle to tasks with a minimum of fuss and behave very sensibly. The adults' caring provision leads to very good achievement in emotional and social development, independence and behaviour. Nursery snack-times are pleasant social occasions when children sit quietly to discuss their activities and news. They are used very effectively for children to develop their language skills, but sometimes opportunities are missed to extend children's speaking skills through skilful questioning. Most children are on course to exceed the expected goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many good opportunities are provided for speaking and listening, but are not fully extended in some activities because of the lack of purposeful adult intervention.
- Children work very hard during lessons and behave very well.
- Teaching is good, but sometimes the slow pace of the lesson impacts on the amount of work accomplished.
- There are good independent related activities.
- Children enjoy listening and reading stories together.

Commentary

33. Children's skills on entry to the nursery are broadly in line with those typical for their age. Speaking and listening skills are as expected, but their skills in reading and writing are slightly below those expected. Overall, children achieve satisfactorily although, throughout their time in the Foundation Stage, they achieve well in speaking and listening. As a result, most children are on course to reach the expected goals by the end of the Reception. The level of support from the teaching assistants is good. Teaching and learning is good overall so that, when they finish their first two years in school, children have secure basic literacy and language skills and are well prepared to move into a more formalised curriculum in Year 1. The major strength in the teaching is the emphasis teachers and support staff place on developing children's basic communication skills and their knowledge of letters, shapes and sounds. Children have good opportunities to regularly experiment, develop, and practise their speaking and listening skills. The teachers are skilled at encouraging all children to speak by skilful questioning, sensitive listening and the use of associated vocabulary. In the reception class, when the teacher is working directly with the children they are purposefully engaged. Children work productively and with interest in most lessons, but in one lesson seen, the slow pace of the lesson affected the amount of work that the reception children achieved during the lesson. From entering the nursery, children are encouraged to handle and discuss the content of books and the majority of reception children know the meaning of *author* and *illustrator*. Children listen avidly and with enjoyment to stories such as *The Ginger Bread Man*. In the reception class staff continue to place considerable emphasis on the recognition of sounds and key words to help children learn to read and write. As a result, most children recognise initial letter sounds and read simple words and sentences. As they move through the two classes, children progress from writing over dots and under writing to 'mark making' as they write their ideas to forming recognisable letters and writing their

name. However, sometimes adults do not intervene enough to help children when they are working alone on activities. As a result, children's skills are not consistently extended to writing simple sentences and, in Reception, only a few write short, simple sentences fairly legibly such as *lamgointooDyar!Sformyte*. Those that do rarely space words correctly or are beginning use basic punctuation. However, children are very keen and enthusiastic. One higher attaining child had the confidence to attempt to write a very short recount of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* that, whilst omitting most of the punctuation, triumphantly ended with *The End*.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skilful planning gives good early opportunities for all children to develop their basic skills.
- Good equipment, activities and displays of numbers help children to learn.
- Staff provide a wide range of independent practical activities to support learning, but they lack purposeful adult intervention to extend children's learning.
- Lively mental warm-up games make learning fun and are used well.

Commentary

34. Standards on entry to the nursery are broadly typical for their age. Teaching and learning in both Nursery and Reception of basic skills is good, but in Reception opportunities are missed to fully extend children's ability to use their skills in practical ways. In both classes, staff make learning fun by the use of singing number songs and games, such as *1. 2. 3. 4. 5, Once I caught a fish alive* and *Five speckled frogs*, which reinforces counting skills and enhances children's personal and social skills. As a result, most children achieve satisfactorily and are on course to reach the expected goals by the end of Reception, although their number skills are better than their calculation. In the nursery, the teacher plans a range of interesting, practical activities that promote and reinforce children's mathematical understanding and encourage their understanding of mathematical language in all their activities. They are encouraged to count in a variety of situations. As a result, many of the nursery children are beginning to count and recognise numbers to 5, identify basic two-dimensional shapes and primary colours and use blocks, jigsaws and counting resources. They count the number of spots on a ladybird, the legs of a spider and a given number of dots on a jigsaw picture in order to select the relevant piece. In the reception class, children make satisfactory progress so they learn to count and recognise numbers to 10 and beyond. When the teacher is working directly with the children practical activities are used well so they learn to solve problems and basic addition. When they are working on their own, children sequence numbers and play games comparing size, shape and colour and recognise patterns and basic shapes. However, when they are working independently, such as in the sand and water, opportunities are missed to extend their mathematical vocabulary and to encourage them to use their good number skills to solve problems and do basic sums. As a result, relatively few children are beginning to carry out simple addition and subtraction using single-digit numbers on their own.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan a wide range of interesting and enjoyable activities to stimulate children's curiosity and enhance their understanding.
- Effective links are made between other areas of learning.
- The wide range of visits, visitors and good resources support and enhance learning.
- Effective use is made of the wide range of ICT resources.

Commentary

35. Standards are good and because of good teaching children achieve well. Most are on course to exceed the expected goals because of consistently good teaching. Children's learning is successfully promoted through well-planned themes such as *Minibeasts Transport*, and *Growth* that develop well children's understanding and enjoyment of the world around them. Teachers provide a very wide range of activities that both interest and stimulate their learning. Children are constantly encouraged to describe their experiences and observations, which means teachers can check if children understand what they are doing. Nursery children are skilfully encouraged to remember and talk about their experiences, which they do confidently and with enthusiasm. They go on *Bug Hunts* in the school wildlife garden and can talk about their 'writing' and drawings of ladybirds, butterflies and frogs they discover. For example, one child explained that 'Ladybirds are spotty'. Older children progress to studying the life cycle of the butterfly, observe and record the growth of a sunflower and name the parts of a flower. Their work is linked successfully with other areas of learning, such as role-play, painting, collages and reading and writing activities. Through books and resources such as *The Three Little Pigs*, they become aware of, and begin to use scientific vocabulary, such as a 'fair test' when they investigate which of the different types of houses made from straw or bricks will blow down first, using their own *huff and puff* and then an electric hair dryer. Teachers make good use of ICT to enhance, reinforce and consolidate learning in many areas of the curriculum, particularly in language and mathematical development. For example, when using a floor robot the children counted accurately 8 movements, recognised the number on the floor mat and confirmed the distance in squares that it travelled, expressing wonder when it moved on command.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's movements are well co-ordinated and controlled.
- Nursery and reception children have access to a very well equipped outdoor area.
- Outdoor resources are very good and enhance certain aspects of children's physical development.

Commentary

36. Standards are good. Most children achieve well and are on course to exceed the expected goals by the end of their reception year. The well resourced outdoor area available for use by the nursery and the reception classes for physical development is timetabled. No outdoor play session was observed because of inclement weather, nor were any physical education sessions. However, children move with increasing control and co-ordination in the classroom, around the school and in the playground. There are also plenty of the planned activities give good opportunities for children to develop their hand control, for example in building with bricks, writing, and colouring, cutting out, painting and sticking. Children in the nursery learn well to use tools and small equipment, such as pencils, crayons and scissors. Reception class children show increasing confidence, accuracy and dexterity as they cut out templates, copy simple words using pencils, and crayon within given numbers, letters and shapes.

They roll, squeeze, push, pull and knead malleable materials and their manipulative skills are developing well. For example, the nursery children made a large lighthouse from 'mod roc' plaster following a visit to the coast and the visit of a local artist. In Reception, children kneaded and made well formed gingerbread biscuits using dough.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are provided for children to express ideas using a variety of materials, media and colours.
- Children show good attitudes to creative development.
- Role-play areas encourage imaginative activities and language development.

Commentary

37. Good teaching, a wide range of resources and effective adult support help the children to achieve well. The great majority are on course to exceed the expected goals by the end of the reception year. Staff provide a wide range of art activities, and art resources are well-organised and accessible. Displays provide a bright, attractive backcloth to the classrooms, reflect well the topics being studied and show that children explore and experiment using colour, texture, shape, form and space in two- and three-dimensional artwork. There are good opportunities for children to take part in informal and planned music sessions and to build up a repertoire of favourite chants, songs and rhymes. For example, nursery children used their imagination well as they performed together, enthusiastically, on tuned and untuned instruments, building up sound effects for thunder, wind and sunny weather. The role-play areas stimulate children's' imaginations very well, such as the nursery children's *Seaside Picnic*. In lessons, children showed developing maturity in their speaking, negotiating and social skills as they independently selected and dressed in bathing costumes, enjoyed their 'picnic', removed their costumes and conscientiously tidied up. Teachers' link role play activities well to other areas of learning, such as science when for example, children in the reception class *Bakery* pretended to mix ingredients and bake gingerbread biscuits, carefully using oven gloves as they put them in the toy oven. These activities also developed their social skills well, but at times there was not enough adult intervention to encourage language development and extend their learning.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good so pupils achieve well.
- Standards in speaking and listening and reading are very good in Year 6
- Teachers provide many opportunities in lessons for pupils to express their ideas and opinions.
- Not enough emphasis is placed on developing pupils' imaginative writing and creativity.
- Assessment information is well to set pupils' targets.
- The targets in the subject leader's action plan are not specific enough or easily evaluated.

Commentary

38. Pupils achieve well in English as they move through the school. In Years 1 and 2 they achieve consistently well. Standards are currently above those expected in reading and speaking and listening and in line with those expected in writing. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to achieve well so that standards in speaking and listening and reading are well

above those expected, and above those expected in writing. School assessment and tracking data, as well as evidence from lessons, shows that pupils with special educational needs achieve well. They achieve very well in their reading skills. This is due to the very good teaching they receive when they are withdrawn to work with the specialist special needs teacher and the good support they get from classroom assistants. This support also ensures that they are fully included in the lessons and are able to complete the tasks they are set.

39. Overall, teaching and learning are good, but there are consistent strengths seen in most classes that contribute to pupils' good achievement. Primarily it is the very strong emphasis teachers place on involving pupils in lessons by using questions very well to stimulate class discussions and debate. In the best lessons, teachers are not content with pupils' first answers and expect them to expand upon their ideas. They also frequently ask pupils to discuss with a partner what they are working on and to come to an agreed view. Teachers use ICT resources very effectively to involve pupils in lessons and encourage them to contribute their ideas and opinions. In the best lessons, seen in an excellent lesson in Year 2 and a very good lesson in Year 4 during the inspection, teachers use techniques such as 'Hot seating' to help pupils relate to the characters they are learning about. However, this very valuable approach is not used extensively across the school to stimulate pupils' imagination and creativity. Overall, these teaching methods also make a very good contribution to pupils' personal skills, in particular their social and spiritual development. However, closing discussions are not consistently used for pupils to consider the aims of the lessons and to discuss how well they think they have done. As a result, opportunities are missed to involve pupils in evaluating their own learning. Teachers' very high expectations of pupils' behaviour ensures that the great majority of lessons are very orderly and very positive learning experiences.
40. Throughout the school, teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic reading and writing skills so they become confident and competent readers, writers and researchers. This begins in Years 1 and 2, where teachers ensure that pupils develop a good understanding of letter names and sounds and understand how to use these skills to read and spell a good range of words. They place a lot of store on developing pupils' handwriting and presentation skills. As a result, in Year 2, many pupils are beginning to write in a joined up style and more able pupils write extended pieces of work that have clear structure and express their ideas well. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 generally maintain these very high expectations so pupils continue to build on their knowledge and understanding. Tasks are usually suitably varied to meet the different learning needs of the range of abilities in the groups. However, the emphasis is very much on narrative and evaluative writing with not as much put on developing pupils' creativity. As a result, although overall standards in writing are above those expected in Year 6, standards of pupils' report and formal writing is much better than their imaginative work.
41. Since the last inspection, the subject leader has led and managed the subject well and has continued to develop the provision so that standards have remained well above average over the last three years. Very effective whole school self-evaluation and monitoring procedures have accurately identified areas for improvement, and the subject leader, together with the headteacher has implemented these well. For example, a good system of tracking pupils' progress has been implemented and the information is used to set targets for pupils. These targets are shared with pupils so they understand what they are working towards. However, although the subject action plan links to the overall school improvement plan, the targets are stated in very

general terms and not closely linked to specific success criteria so the subject leader is not able to prioritise her time or evaluate how successful her work has been on raising standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

42. Pupils have good opportunities to use their literacy skills in many lessons. Teachers place a very strong emphasis on pupils using the correct subject vocabulary in discussions and their writing which has a positive effect on pupils' speaking and writing skills. Most teachers expect pupils to record their own ideas. A particularly strong emphasis is placed on pupils writing up the results of their investigations or research projects in subjects such as geography and science on their own and accounts of events in history. Although this develops pupils' independence skills well, opportunities are missed to help pupils learn to write from the perspectives of other people or, for example to imagine that they were witnesses to an important event in history.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' number skills are good but their ability to apply their skills to investigative and problem-solving activities is not as strong enough.
- The use of ICT in mathematics is good.
- There is no whole school approach to using assessment information to set targets with pupils or to involve them in reviewing their own progress.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their number skills in other subjects.

Commentary

43. Standards in mathematics in the national tests for pupils in Year 6, when viewed over the last three years, have been well above the national average. In 2004, standards were average against all schools, but well below average against similar schools reflecting the below average proportion of pupils reaching the higher than expected level. Current standards in Years 2 and 6 are in line with the national expectations. This is a reflection of achievement in mathematics across the school, which school assessment data and inspection evidence shows is satisfactory. Pupils achieve well in their acquisition of number skills, but satisfactorily in their ability to use these skills. However, this emphasis on basic numeracy benefits pupils with special educational needs. They also benefit from good support from classroom assistants. As a result, they achieve well and early indications show that two out of the six pupils in Year 6 with special educational needs reached the expected level for their age in this year's national tests.
44. The quality of teaching and learning seen in the lessons during the inspection was good, with some aspects of very good teaching, but work in pupils' books and their achievement over time indicate that teaching overall is satisfactory. Throughout the school, most teachers share the learning objectives and discuss the success criteria with the pupils at the start of lessons. As a result, pupils' understand what they will be learning about and have a clear idea about how they will develop their skills. In these opening discussions, teachers also use the interactive whiteboards very effectively to interest and enthuse pupils. Overall, most lessons have brisk beginnings and develop pupils' basic skills well.

45. In the best lessons, teachers ensure that the pace of the lesson is maintained when pupils are working on their own follow-up activities by planning tasks carefully matched to pupils' needs. Lower down the school, teachers use activities linked to pupils' own environment or experience to motivate and interest pupils. For example, pupils in Year 2 used bus timetables for local services around Washington, and pupils in the mixed Year 1/2 class used butterflies to learn about symmetry. In Years 3 to 6, although a few lessons are routine with no

significant variation in activities, limited challenge and uninspiring resource materials, teachers continue to place a very strong emphasis on reinforcing pupils' number skills. In Year 6, organising pupils in groups based on ability ensures that the work in numeracy accurately reflects pupil ability. As a result, pupils develop good basic computation skills. However, as pupils move through the school, opportunities for them to apply their number skills in lessons in practical contexts are more limited. In addition, although work on handling data has been enhanced by ICT links, not enough use of computers is planned routinely into lessons. As a result, pupils' ability to use their skills to solve problems or undertake mathematical investigations is less well developed, which has a negative effect on the proportion of pupils working at the higher than expected level, and on standards of attainment overall.

46. The subject leader for mathematics is very committed, has good subject knowledge, and clearly understands how to develop the subject. She has had opportunities to monitor teaching and has worked with the deputy headteacher, who is responsible for assessment, to identify strategies to raise standards and achievement. As a result, there are plans to make much more use of the assessment data available that tracks pupils' progress over time using teacher assessment and end-of-year tests. The crux of the plan is to introduce focused target setting with pupils in a similar way to that used in English. These targets are stated in this year's action plan for mathematics. However, unfortunately the subject leader has been absent from school through illness this year and, as a result, the time schedule identified in the plan has slipped. In a few classes, teachers use 'traffic light' colours as a self-assessment tool with pupils. This is effective but, overall, pupils are not involved sufficiently in setting targets for learning or evaluating their own progress, so they are unclear about what they need to work on next.

Mathematics across the curriculum

47. Overall, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other subjects, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Across the school, there are good examples, particularly in data handling. For example, pupils in Year 4 were encouraged to display in the most appropriate format data information from various surveys into cars, rainfall and football. In Year 2, data was used in tables and charts to display class surveys on hair and eye colour and in Year 1, the mathematics focus of symmetry linked butterflies to art, science and literacy. However, overall there are missed opportunities in subjects such as science, geography and design and technology for pupils to use the full range of their skills such as measuring, calculation and interpretation of data, which has a negative effect on pupils' achievement and the standards reached by pupils in Year 6.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above national average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 3 to 6, because of the very good teaching.
- The use of investigative work is good and gives pupils opportunities to develop fully their thinking and reasoning skills.
- Good use is made of visits and links with other subjects to enhance scientific work.

- There is a very good emphasis on the use of scientific technical language.

Commentary

48. Standards of work have improved well since the previous inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well due to good teaching, good resources used very effectively and their own willingness to learn. In Years 1 and 2 the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding is good. They can name some common materials and use scientific words such as transparent and waterproof. They know that light comes from a variety of sources including electricity and carry out simple experiments accurately, for example, to consider the changes to materials when heated or cooled. As a result, pupils achieve well to reach standards are above those expected by the end of Year 2 and pupils achieve well. Pupils continue to achieve well and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding at a good pace in Years 3 to 6. As a result, standards in Year 6 are well above those expected.
49. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some very good lessons seen during the inspection in Years 3 and 4. In these lessons, teachers encourage and capture pupils' interest by their command of the subject, high expectations, challenge and the use of good resources. The purposeful atmosphere created in these lessons contributes greatly to nurturing the already very good attitudes of the pupils. In most lessons, teachers give pupils accurate information and use scientific terminology well, so that pupils expand their own knowledge, understanding and vocabulary and make good use of literacy skills when recording their science work. ICT is used very well and teachers make very good use of the interactive whiteboards to introduce investigative work. They use a wide range of practical relevant resources, and their insistence on good behaviour enables all pupils to sustain concentration and work with interest. For example, Year 3 pupils planned, tested and compared the absorbency of different types of papers, working collaboratively and purposefully, and remained fully engaged throughout the lesson. As a result, pupils develop good knowledge across the curriculum and older pupils are very skilled at planning, discussing their ideas and applying their knowledge. Occasionally, although teachers' planning is well structured and lessons delivered at a useful pace, the lack of appropriate work for the full range of abilities or ages in the class does not allow them to be challenged sufficiently, so pupils are not as highly motivated to work hard or to concentrate. In addition, an occasional over-reliance on worksheets restricts the pupils' capacity for reasoning for themselves. However, overall, analysis of pupils' work indicates that their investigative skills are very good throughout the school, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Learning in this area is good because pupils learn to apply their scientific vocabulary well to both describe and infer from what they observe and they begin to think, act and record their findings as scientists.
50. The quality of leadership and management is good. The two subject leaders are enthusiastic and committed and manage the subject well. Monitoring of teaching and learning in order to gain a valuable overview of standards and achievement is in place. As a result, they are well aware of the strengths and areas for development in science. They have a clear action plan, but the targets and success criteria are not rigorous enough to evaluate easily the effect of any initiatives on pupils' achievement. Resources are good and maintained well. The procedures to assess and track the progress of individual pupils as they move through the school are consistent across the school. However, currently, pupils do not have their own personal targets to inform them of the quality and rate of their learning. Overall, this is an improved picture since the last inspection, because of an updated scheme of work, the effective use made of the wide range of ICT resources, science based visits and links with

other subjects, such as design and technology and geography, and the improved use of data handling.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has continued to improve its range of resources and staff expertise.
- There is good teaching of ICT skills in a well-equipped computer suite.
- The subject is very well led and managed, with some innovative developments.
- Not enough use is made of classroom-based computers to extend pupils' skills.

Commentary

51. Standards and pupils' achievement in ICT are good, as they were at the last inspection. The provision of resources across the school is very good. This has stimulated both staff and pupils, motivating the latter to further engage with ICT. It is a rapidly expanding part of the school's curriculum and has maintained pace with developments. The generous provision of two computers and an interactive whiteboard in each classroom and an extensive ICT suite with whiteboard, ensures that teachers have the resources to encourage very good teaching and learning opportunities.
52. Pupils clearly enjoy ICT lessons, and learning is made fun, which results in them being enthusiastic and able to learn new skills easily. Examples of work in Years 1 and 2 show the former to have collated data information (hair and eye colour) and presented their findings as graphs, and pupils in Year 2 have collated and stored information on a database. Having been given questions, they have then used a search tool to find the answers. By the end of Year 2, therefore, standards are above national expectations. This level of working is maintained through Years 3 to 6, so that by the end of Year 6 pupils are still achieving above national expectations. They benefit from activities in data handling such as using a graphics package to explore and produce a graphics model in Year 5 and use *Excel* to produce different types of graphs in Year 4. By Year 6, pupils create data spreadsheets and highlight areas of different significance with colours. This also assists with the exchanging and sharing of information, as does their work devising a PowerPoint presentation explaining their research about mountains.
53. Teaching and learning overall are good. The extensive ICT suite is well equipped and well used to develop pupils' basic ICT skills and knowledge, and for them to use their skills in practise activities. With teachers making good use of whiteboard facilities, the pupils gain from clear demonstrations, ensuring their learning of discreet ICT skills is good. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards well in many lessons to introduce lessons and to present ideas to pupils. They are also used well to involve and enthuse pupils in lessons which makes a very good contribution to the learning atmosphere. Classroom computers are used well for pupils with learning difficulties in Years 1 and 2. However, overall their use in lessons across the school is too limited so there are missed opportunities for pupils to routinely use their skills in 'real' situations. Where ICT teaching is least effective the learning is not matched to pupils' needs and ability, too much is attempted in too short a time, learning is left from one lesson to be continued a week later, and pupils do not know the objective of their learning or how to achieve it.

54. The leadership of the subject is very good. The subject leader is extremely enthusiastic and makes a very good personal contribution to the development of ICT. Through a supportive, empathetic approach with colleagues, good subject knowledge and understanding of needs, training has been organised for staff, most of whom now have personal laptops. Through an initiative developed by the subject leader with the local City Learning Centre, pupils are given

the opportunity to extend their skills at their suite. This has resulted in the school pioneering primary school video conferencing in the local authority. The subject leader is currently trialling a method of assessing and recording pupils' work to track their progress and level of attainment is being piloted with the intention of disseminating this across the school. This should assist with pupil tracking and target setting and help to raise standards further in ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

55. The use of ICT to support learning in most areas of the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers make good use of their interactive whiteboards in opening discussions, to present the aims of a lesson and to involve pupils in their learning, but the classroom computers are not used extensively enough in lessons to reinforce the key ideas being taught. Inspection evidence shows that, whilst teachers do make links between subjects, for example with data handling in mathematics and internet research in literacy and geography, these opportunities are not systematically planned across the school. They tend to rely on individual teacher's initiative and imagination when planning lessons and, as a result, opportunities are missed to extend and develop pupils' basic ICT skills.

HUMANITIES

56. Due to the timetable arrangements and the focus of the inspection, provision in **history** and **geography** was sampled by looking at pupils' work, talking to subject leaders and observing four lessons, three in history and one in geography. The quality of teaching in one of the history lessons was good and the other lessons were satisfactory. Pupils' work and school documentation show that they study a balanced range of topics that provides them with opportunities to develop the full range of skills, knowledge and understanding. Both subjects make a good contribution to pupils' knowledge of their local traditions and history. For example, the school makes appropriate use of the local area and local visits to places such as Washington Old Hall and the village to give pupils practical experiences. Lessons and pupils' books, show that they have good opportunities to use their literacy skills to research specific topics and write about their findings. Teachers use ICT well in lessons, but though there are a few good examples, overall they have fewer opportunities for pupils to use their ICT and numeracy skills.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

57. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about provision in **art and design**, which is taught in half termly units of work, as only one lesson was observed. Teachers' planning indicates that the required curriculum is in place, and provides good, detailed guidance for teachers to develop pupils' knowledge and skills systematically. Pupils' work and displays around school show that they have plenty of opportunities to use a range of media such as pencil, charcoal and paint. They also learn about the work of famous artists from a variety of cultures and from both historical and contemporary society, which makes a good contribution to their cultural development. For example, pupils' colourful, well-executed recreations of imaginative fantasy in the style of the Spanish artist Joan Maro, Indian Mhendi patterns and the study of Aboriginal paintings raised pupils' awareness and brought to life these different cultures. In addition, visits to museums, monuments and ornamental gardens enhance pupils' understanding of the role of art in society and how it enriches the environment. Inspirational visitors are used effectively to enhance pupils' knowledge

and skills in art. Pupils' work showed the good interlinking of subjects as they sketched the journey of Florence Nightingale to the Crimea by using signs and symbols, shape, colour and texture, and created collages of pizzas in their science work. Some moving work by pupils in Year 2 depicted *The Fire of London*. However, there was more limited evidence to indicate that ICT was used regularly and frequently in all classes. The very enthusiastic subject leader keeps a portfolio of completed work, both as a record of work accomplished and as an exemplar to staff of effective practice.

58. **Design and technology** was sampled during the inspection by observing a few lessons, teacher's planning documents, talking to teachers and pupils, and looking at displayed work. In teaching sessions pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively, to view and share each others ideas, and to evaluate each other's work. There is a strong emphasis on safety procedures where pupils are using tools, such as craft knives, which may be dangerous. Good knowledge and understanding by the teacher and teaching assistant in a Year 4 lesson contributed to learning through useful questioning and support in which pupils were encouraged to reflect on the progress of their work and to make evaluations. Activities are sometimes linked to other subjects, making it more meaningful to the pupils, yet still retaining the opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in the subject. For example, Year 2 pupils had designed Joseph's coat of many colours using the computer design repeating patterns, linking with RE and music. Year 4 pupils were designing pop-up pictures linked to their literacy work with scenes relating to the Roald Dahl novel 'George's Marvellous Medicine'. The subject leader has conducted some monitoring of teaching and a recent audit has helped her to plan the next steps in developing the subject.
59. In **music**, pupils were only observed in Year 4, although the whole school was heard singing in assemblies. A positive feature is the use that the school makes of the very good subject expertise of the new subject leader to help pupils to move forward. He is a highly skilled pianist and guitarist, leads the weekly 'singing' sessions, and takes other classes for music. Although only in post since last September, he has set very high standards to which pupils are beginning to respond and his vision of enhanced music provision indicates that the subject is well set to take off in the near future. The talented teacher has an infectious enthusiasm that is transferred to pupils in their performance. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, all pupils participated with sheer enjoyment, demonstrating very good singing and performing skills on tuned and untuned instruments. The teacher's specialist knowledge, his lively pace, and the use of very good resources enlivened, enriched and enhanced pupils' learning. In assemblies, pupils listen reflectively, in a calm atmosphere, to appropriate music such as *Venus* from *The Planets*, by *Gustav Holst*. Visiting instrumental music specialists who teach the violin and the guitar provide good support and the take up of places by pupils is high. Extra-curricular links are being further developed, such as extending the school choir to further improve the quality of the singing and performances through partnership with Durham Cathedral. The school is conscious of the need to incorporate more fully the use of ICT into the music curriculum.
60. During the inspection, it was only possible to sample the provision in **physical education**. One good lesson was seen, a discussion took place with subject leaders and a pre-school tennis coaching session for Year 4 pupils was seen. Since the last inspection, the subject has improved very well. More time has been given to the subject with pupils in Years 1 and 2 having some morning lessons. There has been a focus on improving their basic skills (particularly in throwing and catching) and with their fitness level. The subject is very well led and managed by the subject leader, who has used his good knowledge well to co-ordinate the subject. Following an audit of the provision and with the support of the Link Teacher for the Sports' Co-ordinator programme, from the local secondary school, training sessions were organised to assist all staff in teaching gymnastics and large apparatus work. Staff have also benefited from the expertise of a range of specialists who have worked with the children. Consequently, teachers work more confidently with pupils in tennis, gymnastics and soccer. In the session seen, pupils worked very well together, showed very positive attitudes and behaved very well. The school offers a very wide and diverse range of extra-curricular sports activities, with a 'fit for fun' club for pupils

in Years 1 and 2. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have had the opportunity to participate in fencing, cross-country and hockey, football, netball, tennis and fitness activities. Resources are very good and the school is part of a loan scheme, sharing equipment with the local secondary school.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

61. Due to the timetabling arrangements it was not possible to see enough lessons to make a secure judgement on the provision for pupils' **personal, social and health education**. However, discussions with pupils and staff show that the school places a very good emphasis on developing pupils' personal skills and has a comprehensive programme in place to develop this aspect of pupils' learning. All classes have weekly lessons, much of which is discussion-based, which helps pupils develop their speaking skills. Sex and relationships and drugs education is included in the programme. External agencies are involved where appropriate to help class teachers tackle difficult or personal issues. As a result, as pupils move through the school, they develop their personal skills and learn their responsibilities to each other, the school and their local community.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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