

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S AND ST BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Preston

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119704

Headteacher: Mrs S Smith

Lead inspector: Mrs C A Field

Dates of inspection: 23rd - 25th May 2005

Inspection number: 267867

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 256
School address: Browndge Lane
Bamber Bridge
Preston
Postcode: PR5 6TA
Telephone number: (01772) 336 650
Fax number: (01772) 629 482
Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr P Dowbakin
governors:
Date of previous June 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's and St Benedict's Catholic School serves the Bamber Bridge community of Preston; an area of private and social housing. There are 256 pupils from the age of 4 to 11 on roll. The number on roll has been falling for the last few years but is now stabilising. There are currently 35 children in the Reception classes. The profile of children's attainment when they start school is currently average but varies between years. Almost all pupils are of white British ethnic origin but a very small number are from Chinese heritage. There are no pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. A broadly average proportion of pupils have special educational needs that cover a range of learning or behaviour needs. An above average proportion has a statement in place to support their specific difficulties. A similar proportion of pupils take up free school meals as is seen in most primary schools.

The school works in active partnership with local schools, the church and various business and community groups to extend pupils' curricular experiences.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
9479	C Field	Lead inspector	Personal, social, health education and citizenship
10965	P Edwards	Lay inspector	
15414	D Carrington	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematic Information and communication technology
1189	S Brown	Team Inspector	English Music Physical education
8710	J Moore	Team inspector	Science Geography History
32466	J O'Neill	Team inspector	Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage Art and design Design and technology

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PART A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a **satisfactory** standard of education and one that is rapidly improving after a period of significant instability in senior staffing. The headteacher is leading from the front and is working in a productive partnership with governors and senior leaders, to move the school forward on a broad range of fronts. Teaching and learning are good and are supporting rising achievement. The school has a strong Catholic Christian ethos that values all pupils equally and promotes caring and respectful attitudes. Pupils and parents hold positive views about the school and say how much things are changing for the better. The school is trying its level best to make improvements and its strategies are proving successful. The school gives **sound** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and governance are good and this is why the school is moving forward.
- Staff morale is upbeat and there is a good sense of teamwork emerging as a strength.
- Teaching and learning are good overall but much more effective in the last two years of school than in other years, and as a result pupils' achievement accelerates.
- Teachers' assessment though satisfactory is not sufficiently focused on identifying the next steps for improvement in learning. There are missed opportunities to use data to support target setting and pupil self-review.
- Good provision is made for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and this is supporting their growth as responsible future citizens.
- The curriculum is supported well by positive links with parents, the church and wider community but there are missed opportunities to promote writing, ICT and investigative skills.
- Good attention is paid to health, safety and welfare and pupils are well looked after.
- The outdoor provision made for the Reception children is unsatisfactory.
- Management systems are not rigorous enough in terms of monitoring and evaluation to give good support to the drive for raising standards.

The school has made progress since its previous inspection six years ago but the journey of improvement has seen peaks and troughs. The local authority withdrew an intensive level of support in early 2004. Since then, leaders and governors have worked together to make sure that strengths are built upon and identified weaknesses tackled. There are still key areas to be improved that were flagged by the previous inspection, for example assessment, monitoring and evaluation and the outdoor provision for Reception children. The school has set up a clear action plan to remedy this situation that is being implemented with confidence. The school is judged to have good capacity to make the necessary improvements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** overall. The school's trend in raising standards is above that seen nationally. From a broadly average baseline the results in the table that follows show that last year the pupils in Year 6 did as well as other pupils of the same age in English and science and much better than them in mathematics.

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

science	E	C	C	C
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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.

Current standards are average in English, mathematics, science and ICT and all other subjects sampled by inspectors at the end of Years 2 and 6. From a typically average baseline the pupils build their knowledge, understanding and skills steadily as they move through all stages of their education. Standards have not been reported in religious education, as this is a church-aided school, and an inspection of this is taking place later in the term.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are good. Pupils are enthusiastic, well-behaved and confident learners. Their spiritual, moral, social and personal development is **good**. Attendance and punctuality are both satisfactory. There have been no exclusions in the recent past.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall and most effective in the last two years of school where expectations are higher and more challenge is placed on higher attainers. Assessment, though satisfactory, is not sufficiently rigorous to play a pivotal role in raising standards. There are some gaps in assessment procedures that mean pupils' achievement is not reviewed often enough. The curriculum is satisfactory with some positive enrichment. However, there is insufficient promotion of cross-curricular writing, ICT and investigative aspects of science, geography and history. Accommodation and resources are generally satisfactory but the building has weak aspects in its design and layout and outdoor resources for the Reception-age children are unsatisfactory. Good attention is paid to health, safety and welfare and pupils are well looked after. The programme for PSHCE¹ has been well conceived and is highly effective in preparing pupils very well for the next stage of education and later life. The effective links with parents and the wider school community have a beneficial impact on pupils' curricular experiences.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher is providing strong educational direction and the changes introduced in line with the her very appropriate vision for the school's future, have brought improvement. The leadership team has the drive and determination necessary to take the school forward. Governors are well informed about school performance and are influential in its development and improvement. Subject leaders do not yet have a consistent or rigorous enough role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of education and the rate of pupils' achievement. The school is aware that a more systematic review of quality and standards is required and the inspection findings confirm that this is a key area to be improved.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils and parents hold very positive views about the school and say how much things are changing for the better. Parents are supportive of the school and most are happy with the information they receive, though a few would like more details about their child's achievement. Pupils say they are very happy to come to school and can think of very few ways in which to improve it. Pupils told inspectors that they like the new roles and responsibilities they have been given through the formation of the school council and feel that their opinions are listened to and acted upon. The *chill room* is a good example of pupils' ideas being put into practice, as is the work in progress on playground enhancement.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

¹ PSHCE refers to personal, social, health education and citizenship.

- Add rigour to monitoring and evaluation activities so that senior and middle managers have more extensive information about standards, teaching and learning to support the drive for raised standards.
- Ensure that assessment and target-setting systems, and marking are used consistently to plan pupils' next steps in learning, to track their achievement and to involve them in reviewing their progress. Make sure that assessment systems are in place where there currently are none.
- Review the curriculum to make sure that writing, ICT and investigative aspects are properly planned for and consistently well promoted as part of the move towards *Excellence and Enjoyment*.
- Press ahead with the plans for providing good quality outdoor experiences for the Reception-age children.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** overall and improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's trend in raising standards is above that seen nationally.
- Effective improvement strategies, including the reallocation of teaching roles is helping the school move forward.
- Standards are currently average and reflect satisfactory achievement.
- Achievement is good in the last two years of school.
- The school is aware of the need to improve assessment systems and sharpen up monitoring and evaluation processes to help iron out the inconsistency in achievement between year groups.

Commentary

1. The school has made progress since its previous inspection six years ago but the journey of improvement in standards has seen and peaks and troughs. In 1999, standards were reported as broadly average but national test data showed them to be below those found in similar schools. Writing was found to be a weakness. ICT was said to be on the move as new resources supported better progress. The situation today is somewhat better than it was, for example in writing where skills are showing improvement due to the school's effective strategies and in ICT where the new suite has proved a tangible asset in improving confidence and driving up standards. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement in both of these aspects, as the school is well aware. Past staffing difficulties are now in check and new appointments are bringing a freshness of approach to complement that of longer-serving members.
2. There are strong indications of improving provision as the most recent national test data shows in the table that follows. Standards were below average in writing and reading and well below average in mathematics. Standards were well below those seen in similar schools in all areas. However, the results in 2004 were very much better than in 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.1 (12.8)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	13.6 (12.8)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	15.2 (13.7)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 36 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The data in the table that follows shows that in 2004, standards in Year 6, were average in English and science and above average in mathematics. Standards were better than those seen in 2003 in mathematics but not in the other two subjects. The trends over 4 years show that pupils are more consistent in their performance in mathematics and science than in English. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 or above in the Year 6 national tests in 2004 was much higher than that reported by the previous inspection in 1999. There has been a very significant increase in the proportion of pupils who are reaching the level expected for their age now than at that time. These Year 6 pupils also did as well as pupils in similar schools in English and science and much better in mathematics. The school has set challenging targets for Year 6 pupils' performance in 2005 and the next step is to

inject a similar level of challenge into the targets set in other years so that achievement is the best it can be over time.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.7 (27.7)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	28.2 (27.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	28.7 (28.9)	28.6 (28.6)

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

4. Children in the Nursery start with typically average levels of skill and knowledge. They learn successfully and achieve appropriately by the time they complete the Foundation Stage and are ready to transfer to Year 1. Most are on track meet the goals expected for children of this age. Pupils achieve soundly in Years 1 to 4 and better than this in Years 5 and 6 due to better teaching. Current standards are average in English, mathematics, science and ICT and all other subjects sampled by inspectors at the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards have not been reported in religious education as an inspection of this is taking place later in the term, as this is a church-aided school.

5. The school's good approach to inclusion enables boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds and across the attainment range to achieve at very similar rates. The current provision being made for pupils with learning difficulties includes well-focussed individual education plans that have been introduced by the headteacher, who is managing this aspect in the absence of the post holder, and these are supporting the pupils in making improved progress in their personal targets. The provision for the small group of pupils with gifts and talents is less good. However, the school has made a start by identifying those pupils with gifts and talents in each class and provides some additional challenge via the extra-curricular programme and through initiatives such as *MAP*. The school has already secured training to support the next stage of development of its provision for gifted and talented pupils and is right to do so.

6. Sound attention is given to developing pupils' basic skills. The introduction of a home reading diary in all years is a useful way to widen parental involvement in support of their children's education. Pupils' writing skills are improving and the introduction of regular writing assessments is a very positive feature in helping teachers and managers keep a check on the progress being made by each pupil. The school is alert to the need to tighten up on spellings, presentation and the use of grammar and these are all identified for improvement in the well-conceived subject action plan. These elements of writing are currently holding back higher standards being reached in history and geography too. A good focus on mental mathematics is supporting pupils' achievements and inspectors observed generally well-taught lessons in which pupils made good progress. Boys and girls make equally good use of subject-specific vocabulary, to answer questions or to explain approaches to solving problems, for example in numeracy sessions. The local authority gave the school an intensive level of support to literacy and numeracy development between 2002 and 2004 and this helped the school build for improvement during a time of significant changes in staffing. The school has improved the provision for higher attainers well in mathematics but not as well in English and science. The headteacher is progressing a strategy for more able pupils (known as the *MAP project*) that involves some 30 pupils from Years 3 to 6 working with governors and local businesses on problem-solving activities one afternoon a week. The work being done was seen to be of very good quality and adding considerable value to the pupils' education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have **good** attitudes and behaviour. Their personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Attendance and punctuality are both **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils work hard, behave responsibly and are keen to learn.
- Pupils have very positive views about their school.
- Relationships are good and the pupils are happy.
- Pupils are developing as good future citizens.

Commentary

7. The school has successfully maintained the good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy school and are very positive about their work. Many speak very proudly of their school and enthusiastically discuss aspects of school life such as, the plans for playground improvement and the development of the environmental area. Pupils are confident and respond well to praise. They are keen to take responsibility for their own learning and work well collaboratively and in pairs when provided with the opportunity. Behaviour in lessons and around and about the school is generally good. Pupils are friendly, polite and well mannered. They respond well to the award of team points and look forward to gaining time in the newly developed and high quality *chill out* area. There have been no exclusions in the recent past. Pupils are well prepared to take their place as responsible future citizens.
8. Pupils' spiritual development is good and reflects well the Catholic Christian ethos of the school. Pupils gain a good understanding of their own faith and the religious beliefs of others. The opportunity to develop pupils' self-knowledge is well promoted in assemblies and at circle time. The contribution of pupils' singing at hymn practice is uplifting. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's rules and the expectations of the staff and clearly know the difference between right and wrong. They told inspectors that bullying, racism and other forms of harassment are not issues in the school and say that they feel secure in the knowledge that any reported incidents would be dealt with effectively by staff. They are aware of the importance of being kind and supportive of each other and are effectively encouraged to think about and care for one another by the good example adults set. The pupils undertake lots of charitable endeavour and through such work and links with charities such as *Cafod*, they gain a deep appreciation of the lives of others less fortunate than themselves.
9. Older pupils enjoy the opportunities provided to take positions of responsibility such as register monitor, equipment monitor in assembly, prefects, school council members and supporting the youngest children at play. They carry out these tasks willingly and to the best of their ability. Pupils have a strong sense of community and are very proud of the contributions they make to the life of the school, especially through their involvement in the decisions of the highly active school council. Pupils' social development is good.
10. Cultural development is strong. Pupils have a very good understanding of their own culture. The school provides a range of opportunities for them to explore and learn about their own cultural heritage. For example, they take part in music and art festivals and visit places of interest such as the Lancashire museum, Derwent Water and Leighton Hall. Pupils in the French club enjoy discovering French food, music and conversation. There is good provision for learning about the diversity of other cultures and faiths represented in society through religious education, literature, art and music. This has been an improvement since the time of the previous inspection.

11. Attendance is in line with the national average and punctuality is satisfactory. The rate of unauthorised absence is much higher than typically found. Staff monitor attendance and punctuality well with first day contact for absence. However, a handful of parents are not giving the support required. The headteacher has introduced a new initiative that involves pupils lining up in the playground each morning instead of just drifting in, which was the situation back in September. The class who lines up most quickly and ready for work is awarded a ticket that goes in the gold box and a winner is drawn each week and a prize awarded. The pupils told the inspectors that they think this is great!

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	4.1	School data:	1.4
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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **satisfactory**. The sound curriculum offers worthwhile experiences for the pupils with some good enrichment. Pupils receive good care and positive support. The school has an effective partnership with parents and has forged strong links with other schools and its community for the benefit of pupils.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and are supporting rising achievement.
- The best teaching was observed in Years 5 and 6 where expectations are high.
- Teachers’ assessment, though satisfactory, is not sufficiently focussed on identifying the next steps for improvement in learning, or to support target setting and pupil self-review.

Commentary

12. The positive qualities in teaching identified by the previous inspection have been sustained and weaknesses have already been, or are being, addressed. For example, teachers now demonstrate good subject knowledge in ICT and this was found to have shortcomings last time the school was inspected. Assessment, flagged as a weakness then, is now satisfactory overall but is ripe for improving further. Staff absence was flagged as an inhibitor to pupils’ successful learning at that time, and in part this is still apparent today. For example, school and local education authority records identify that some lower junior pupils have been unsettled in their learning by staffing changes. A few of the parents raised this with inspectors. Overall, satisfactory teaching and learning was observed in lower juniors classes, though qualities ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. The appointment of new senior staff is having a very positive impact on teaching and learning here and this is helping raise pupils’ achievement at a rapid pace. The headteacher and governors have selected staff for their complementary skills and talents and for personal qualities that include a strong determination to seek sustained improvement. Morale is good and staff are reflective

about their practice and ready to take on new challenges as they arise. There is good teamwork between teachers and support assistants that is emerging as a strength.

13. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in all but one of the 49 lessons observed by inspectors and in most were of good or better quality. Good teaching is evident in all year groups from Reception to Year 6, and across all classes and includes good encouragement, effective teamwork and good promotion of equality of opportunity. Universally, good attention is given to setting high standards of behaviour and as a result classes are happy, settled and productive places of work. Very supportive and respectful relationships stand out as a key feature of the school's Catholic Christian ethos and these underpin the pupils' effective learning.
14. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well and given good support to help them learn with success. Mostly they receive additional in-class support from the skilled support assistants, with well-chosen activities that match the targets on their individual education plans (IEPs). Occasionally, they withdraw from the classroom for one-to-one additional input or to work in small groups. Their progress is now being very carefully monitored and recorded. Opportunities for stretching the higher attaining pupils are being developed. The MAP project mentioned earlier in this report is one such example. The school is aware of the need to extend provision for this group of boys and girls by ensuring that all lessons offer the right amount of challenge to move their learning forward at the best pace possible. The well-conceived action plan that includes clear targets for aiding this process is a useful start.
15. Teaching and learning are good overall but much more effective in the last two years of school than in other years, and as a result, pupils' achievement accelerates. This is particularly noticeable in science and ICT, in both the lessons observed and in pupils' work in the books they started in September and are currently using. The one unsatisfactory science lesson observed in lower juniors was because of a lack of challenge and pace in delivery that impeded pupils learning as much as they should about food chains and food webs. In contrast, one very good learning opportunity for pupils with statements of special educational needs and four very good lessons observed in Years 5 and 6, all had common features that enabled good achievement. These included very high expectations for the standard and amount of work to be completed, very well matched work to cater for pupils' different attainment levels, and active teaching methods that engaged the pupils in practical learning experiences that were both challenging and fun.
16. Pupils' creative writing skills are developing soundly due to the school's effective strategies; however, there is room for improvement in the use of grammar, spellings and presentation. Limitations in these areas are having an adverse impact on recorded work in subjects such as geography and history where an over-use of worksheets also curtails pupils' independent learning skills. More effective use of assessment data and extending the use of targets in marking would support the school's good drive to raise standards. Good attention is being given to homework with challenges set in English and mathematics weekly in all years that add value to pupils' learning in school.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	5 (10%)	19 (38%)	20 (40%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

The curriculum

The **sound** curriculum provides a range of worthwhile experiences across subjects and meets statutory requirements. Extra curricular provision is **good** and the quality and quantity of accommodation and resources meet the needs of the curriculum **satisfactorily** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is supported well by positive links with parents, the church and wider community but there are missed opportunities to promote writing, ICT and investigative skills in a range of subjects.
- The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is showing recent improvement this year and pupils with learning difficulties are making good progress as a result.
- The ICT suite is a good asset, however computer resources based in classrooms are under-utilised.
- The outdoor provision for children in the Reception classes is unsatisfactory and some resources are care-worn.

Commentary

17. The strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum are much the same as those reported when the school was last inspected. The school's priorities have been English, mathematics, science and ICT, and to some extent other subjects have taken a back seat. The school's strategies to improve core subjects are proving positive as shown by the rising national test results. The curriculum is satisfactory with some positive enrichment. However, there is insufficient promotion of cross-curricular writing, the use of ICT in other subjects and investigative aspects of science, geography and history. The school improvement plan identifies the need to reshape the curriculum in the light of the national guidance entitled *Excellence and Enjoyment* and inspectors agree with this evaluation.
18. Staff changes and long-term absence have had a negative impact on subject development and the provision made for pupils with special educational needs. Over recent months the picture is more positive with the appointment of new staff and the reallocation of roles. New and more experienced subject leaders show an enthusiasm for extending their curricular roles and responsibilities. Parents hold positive views about the changes. Parents of pupils with statements told inspectors that the quality of provision has improved in recent months and others said how pleased they are that new extra-curricular clubs are being organised and exciting initiatives such as MAP being trialled.
19. Planning shows that all subjects are taught appropriately over the year and that statutory requirements are adequately met. Timetables were reviewed and changed in January to facilitate reading, phonics and data handling elements in the light of school self-evaluation. The work in pupils' books from last year identifies a superficial coverage of some topics in non-core subjects, and an over-use of work sheets in history and geography in lower juniors in particular, that enables pupils' knowledge to be built but caps the development of enquiry and research skills. In contrast some of the work covered has been a positive experience for pupils. Year 5 pupils told inspectors how much they had enjoyed writing about World War 2 and making cardboard mock-ups of bomb-proof shelters in design and technology lessons.
20. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy a rich and varied curriculum. Approaches are inclusive and children of all backgrounds and abilities are catered for well. Experiences are well chosen to enable the youngest children to grow academically and socially. The indoor early years environment is an attractive and stimulating place, though resources are not always of the best and the outdoor provision does not enable the youngest children in school the opportunity for good quality physical exercise.

21. The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is showing good improvement. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good. It is well tailored to their specific capabilities and aptitudes and carefully planned. These pupils study the same topics in each subject as the other pupils but the work set is well matched to their previous achievement and helps them to consolidate and extend their skills and knowledge systematically. It is a particular strength that the school makes a conscious and totally successful effort to ensure that all activities are equally available to all pupils.
22. There is a good level of enrichment to the curriculum supported by a programme of visits and visitors that are linked to specific topics. For example, a visit by a mum with her new baby helped stimulate writing about growing up and supported personal and social skills development. Pupils are provided with the opportunity to participate in one of a satisfactory range of extra-curricular clubs that include a range of sporting and musical activities. An art club runs in the holidays. Links with receiving secondary schools are well forged and involve reciprocal visits to support Year 6 pupils' transfer. The school provides two residential experiences for upper junior pupils.
23. There is a reasonable level of staffing overall, and the number of teaching assistants is typical of that found in most primary schools of this size. Teaching assistants are a dedicated team and work in good partnership with teachers. Teaching assistants represent a sound investment by the governors as they work effectively in helping pupils with barriers to their learning to overcome these successfully. Accommodation and resources are generally satisfactory but the building has weak aspects in its design and layout. There is a lot of surplus space that requires rationalisation and some areas are not well maintained. For example, the junior hall and library are both unappealing places for both teaching and learning. Accommodation is causing some concern for governors as the very tight budget means that they have to implement a rolling programme of repair and upgrade at a much slower pace than they would like. This has had an impact on improvement too as flagged earlier in respect of the outdoor provision for the Reception-age children. Governors are being pro-active in marketing new residential developments to try to increase the number on roll and in this way add to the budget. Positive improvement in the accommodation since the time of the previous inspection includes the ICT suite, which is a good asset and used well.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils' health, safety and welfare are **good** and pupils receive good support and guidance during their time at school. The school effectively seeks and acts upon pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Child protection training is up to date and procedures are well known by staff.
- Parents are supportive of the school's induction programme.
- The school values pupils' views highly and consults and involves them in decision-making.
- The school promotes a caring Catholic Christian ethos where teachers know their pupils well and are responsive to needs.

Commentary

24. The school has maintained the good quality of its care and support since the time of the previous inspection. Parents are very pleased with the level of care given to their children. Pupils have a good and trusting relationship with all adults working in the

school. Good relationships have already been built with new staff. Class teachers and support staff take the time to get to know the pupils well. They value them as individuals and make every effort to improve their self-esteem by acknowledging their achievements. The great majority of parents share the opinion of inspectors that this is a caring school that pays good attention to ensuring pupils' welfare.

25. The school has an effective health and safety policy. Governors carry out regular risk assessments and all safety checks are up to date. Arrangements for first aid and informing parents of any accidents and the treatment given are effective. Child protection training is up to date and the procedures are well known by staff. The school has good policies and procedures for managing behaviour, bullying and attendance. Procedures for dealing with incidents of racial harassment are effective. In line with requirements, the school undertakes an annual return to the local education authority that sets out all instances of racism. No instances have been reported.
26. Guidance and support for academic development is good overall, including that now provided for those with special educational needs. However, there is inconsistency in the way in which all pupils receive clear, diagnostic guidance in teachers' marking, so that they know exactly what they need to do to improve and this requires review. The school has made a good start with identifying those pupils with gifts and talents but the provision made for them is not yet as focused and as challenging as it should.
27. The school gathers pupils' views through class discussion, the group who are involved with the *MAP* project and through the voice of the school council. The council meets weekly and effectively contributes to the life of the school. Pupils have developed good and trusting relationships with all adults working in the school, including welfare staff who they feel are always willing to listen to both sides of any disagreements, which may arise and always deal with them fairly.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school and happy with the information they receive.
- There is very good support given by parents, parishioners and other volunteers who assist in school on a regular basis.
- Pupils' annual progress reports are detailed but targets for development are too broad.
- The school has good links with business, the parish church and local community.
- The school has developed a good partnership with other local schools.

Commentary

28. The school has maintained the good quality of its partnership with parents since the time of the previous inspection. Parents are very proud of the school and feel comfortable about approaching staff with any question or concerns. The information provided for parents in weekly newsletters, at termly parent teacher consultation meeting and in the curriculum information letters is good. There is detailed information provided in pupils' annual progress reports regarding work covered and what pupils can do. However many targets for development are too broad and do not give parents sufficient information about how to help their children at home. The school usefully consults parents about school matters, for example about changes to the school uniform, and this is a positive feature. The majority of parents and pupils' are happy with the amount of homework given and feel it successfully builds on learning in school. The home-school agreement effectively supports the schools policies on

homework, behaviour and attendance. Staff appreciate the regular, reliable help given by parents, parishioners and volunteers in class, around the school and with clubs. The Parent Teacher Association is successfully involved in raising funds to support pupils' learning.

29. The school partnership with the local community effectively contributes to pupils' learning through visits to the library, supermarkets, local parks and links with businesses such as B and Q, Leyland Trucks and Barratt Homes. The good partnership with other schools enriches pupils' learning for example through athletic coaching, links for drama, specialist teaching and in service training for staff with St. Mary's Catholic High School and Newman Sixth Form College. These links also effectively support pupils' moving on to the next stage of their education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership, governance and management is **good** overall. The head teacher and key staff provides **good** leadership. Management is **satisfactory** with some aspects that require improvement. Since she took up her post in September, the headteacher has made an accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is introducing change wisely and effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear and convincing vision of what she wants the school to be, and is making sensible change to support her high expectations.
- The leadership team has the drive and determination necessary to take the school forward.
- Governors are well informed about school performance and are influential in its development and improvement.
- Subject leaders do not have a consistent or rigorous enough role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of education and rate of pupils' achievement.
- Recent changes have been managed positively and the school has good potential to meet the challenges of the future.

Commentary

30. Since the previous inspection there have been a number of significant changes of staff, especially to the leadership team. This resulted in a period of stagnation in school and uncertainty amongst staff as to the educational direction of the school. However, with the appointment of the current headteacher last September, a focused, planned and determined approach has been adopted to ensure that pupils receive an improved quality of education.
31. Upon taking up her post, the headteacher swiftly and accurately evaluated the school's performance and set about building on the identified strengths and eliminating the weaknesses. The headteacher set very clear expectations and worked in a determined way and managed change well in order to improve the lot of the pupils. Since the start of 2005 it is evident that the changes introduced in line with the headteacher's very appropriate vision for the school's future, have brought improvement. For example, the headteacher took over the role of special educational needs coordinator this year in the light of the long-term absence of the teacher with this responsibility. The identified priorities of making the initial assessments of pupils with special educational needs earlier and more timely, sharpening the targets on pupils' individual education plans, and planning a curriculum firmly rooted in the

necessary small steps to reach these targets, have been followed through with effective action. Currently, there are evident improvements in the sharper focus on skills and knowledge in the individual targets, and the effective re-assessment of pupils with special educational needs to ensure their individual requirements are met in full. A recent monitoring report from the local education authority identifies that the recent changes made are for the better. Overall, provision for pupils with special educational needs is currently satisfactory, but the planned improvements are the right ones and show good capacity for supporting a good level of provision for pupils with special educational needs in the near future.

32. Governors are alert to the challenges facing the headteacher and they are supportive and involved where improvement is due. Governors are increasing their skills of constructive, critical questioning to ensure that the school is meeting the needs of its diverse range of pupils as effectively as possible. They understand the headteacher's emphasis on the required greater rigour and consistency in management procedures, in order that the needs of the pupils are put first. The next step for governors, through the curriculum links they are developing, is to monitor the curriculum more rigorously at first hand.
33. The newly comprised leadership team are a skilful group who between them have many talents, not least as very good teaching role models for others. Its composition is changing as a key member of staff takes maternity leave and at present, one of the recently appointed assistant headteachers, is working on a temporary basis in school, pending the start of her permanent contract in September next. The leadership team are a well-bonded group who have a shared vision for taking the school forward and are united in their determination to make the school one of the best.
34. Subject leadership in school is in a state of flux. This is because a number of key people have taken on different subject responsibilities. In general, subject leaders are hard working and committed to the priorities of the headteacher, though their role in quality assurance is not yet fully established because they are insufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluation of school and subject performance. Additionally, the target setting, sharing and tracking process is insufficiently embedded in school. It is more advanced, particularly in rigour and consistency in some years and subjects, than others. The leadership team rightly identify this as a key priority for improvement, alongside the enhancement of the role of the subject leaders and the need for intensive training.
35. The strategic planning of school improvement is well improved over the previous model. Underpinning the priorities is the rightly held conviction that the pupils' needs must come first. The priorities are very well identified and there are measurable success indicators, which provide benchmarks to assist the rapidity and effectiveness of improvement.
36. Financial management is satisfactory. One of the effects of the continual turnover of key leaders in the past was the slippage in probity of financial control and management. In November 2004 the local education authority financial audit identified around 20 major areas of financial management that were in need of substantial improvement. The school was placed in the third lowest of four categories of financial management and systems were found to be unsatisfactory. The headteacher picked up the challenge presented by this categorisation and swiftly introduced changes. In February 2005, the auditors acknowledged the effectiveness of the turn-round and the good work that had been done to eliminate weaknesses in systems of accountability.

37. Today, the school offers sound value for money in the quality of provision. School leaders regard this as an absolute minimum level of desirable value and are working successfully to make the school more effective all-round. The potential for the school to improve to good quality educational provision is positive. The process of improvement has got off to a spirited start and the momentum for change is growing in impact.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	677,324
Total expenditure	692,605
Expenditure per pupil	2,674

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	44,471
Balance carried forward to the next year	29,190

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement are all satisfactory.
- Relationships are good and help the children learn with confidence.
- Liaison with local nursery providers is good and supports the effective induction arrangements well.
- Monitoring and evaluation of provision is not yet rigorous enough to help raise quality and improve standards.
- Resources are satisfactory overall, however, the lack of outdoor play facilities raised by the previous inspection has still not been addressed and this is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

38. At the time of the inspection there were 35 children in the Reception classes that comprise the *Foundation Stage*. The children receive a good, fully inclusive education and carefully planned induction procedures enable them to settle quickly and happily into school. The standard of the children's skills and knowledge when they first start is currently average but this varies from year-to-year. By the end of Reception, the majority of children will attain the Early Learning Goals in most areas of learning. The support for children with special educational needs is particularly good and the work of teaching assistants is a strength here. The children's preparation for Year 1 is satisfactory. However, the recording of their achievements could be used to better effect to inform planning for personalised learning and meeting individual needs, particularly for the higher attaining children.
39. The ethos promoted here is caring and the children feel confident and safe to take full advantage of the opportunities provided. Overall, teaching is satisfactory with some examples of good practice. In the better lessons observed, children were able to plan and manage aspects of their own learning within a well-structured activity that featured clear learning intentions. There is much enjoyment in the lessons in the Reception classes, but sometimes this is not well directed into productive outcomes, and occasionally noise levels are too high as the children's natural exuberance takes over. Nevertheless, good relationships between children and adults are a consistent feature that underpins the steady gains being made in the children's all round development. The curriculum is satisfactory and it provides a balance between child-initiated learning and adult-directed activities. Often there are joint activities within the stage using an additional classroom for creative play.
40. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school improvement plan rightly shows that a sharper focus on monitoring and evaluation is required to ensure that practice is the best it can be. Thoughtful planning is being undertaken by the existing Foundation Stage Manager to ensure continuity during her maternity leave. The accommodation is satisfactory as are resources, though some of the dressing up clothes and role-play resources are care-worn and require attention. No progress has been made to develop an outdoor play area as raised by the previous inspection and this is unsatisfactory. School leaders and governors should press on with the planned improvement without further delay, as outdoor experiences are a vital aspect of the children's physical development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children build their personal and social skills at a sure but steady pace.
- All staff are good role models and promote mutual respect.
- The children are confident and happy learners because they feel safe and well looked after.
- There are inconsistencies between the two classes in approaches to extending independent learning and in the management of behaviour.

Commentary

41. When children start in the Reception, skills are broadly in line with those expected for children of this age. Children quickly learn classroom routines. The adults work consistently to develop children's confidence and independence. Attitudes to learning are positive. Children build their personal and social skills at a sure but steady pace.
42. All staff are good role models and promote mutual respect. In consequence, the children treat each other fairly and show consideration towards each other. They trust the adults and are happy and secure. A few children have underdeveloped social skills and find it hard to conform on occasions, they are helped to overcome these personal barriers well by the staff. Systems are in place for rewards to be given and praise is used regularly. However, children would benefit if like practice was carried out in both classes.
43. Children are continually encouraged to feel confident about what they achieve and the majority of children show confidence when they tackle new situations. Children do make choices and decisions, but more independent learning is an area for development. Children work well together, listen to the contributions of others, and know how to wait their turn. The majority of children are willing to share with others. Teaching is satisfactory and most pupils will achieve the early learning goals in this area before entering Year 1.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory and the children build their language and literacy skills steadily.
- Good strategies are in place for developing early writing skills.
- Guided reading is supporting reading skills improvement.

Commentary

44. When children start in the Reception, skills are broadly in line with those expected for children of this age. Children achieve steadily as a result of sound teaching and the many opportunities they are given to speak and listen. Support staff are particularly skilled at encouraging purposeful talk. Children listen well to the adults. They enjoy

stories, songs and rhymes. Staff rightly insist on children listening to the contributions of other children and this is supporting respect for others. In a lesson that was planned by a teacher and delivered by support staff featuring the story *Going On A Bear Hunt*, there was high quality talk, with staff asking appropriate questions, seeking well thought through answers and encouraging the children to think in a lively and creative way as they re-enacted the story with well-chosen resources. Through such *hands-on* approaches, the teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the children's learning. During such activities and class sessions all staff are genuinely interested in what the children have to say and this is a positive feature in supporting their growing skills.

45. The children have a good appreciation of books and understand that text conveys meaning. Most show enjoyment when looking at books, and listen attentively to stories. In a good lesson observed when the teacher was wearing a bear mask and acting in role to help tell the story, the children were enthralled and asked some very pertinent questions about the characters and plot. The children handle books with care.
46. The promotion of early writing skills is satisfactory with some good features. The children are enabled to write in a variety of contexts. For example, a writing area exists where the children are encouraged to make books and write signs or lists. The standard of writing is satisfactory overall. Higher attainers have written about their experiences on a journey to school and when they went to visit a bus wash. There are letters sent to *baby bear* in display that show the full ability spread. Children's handwriting is sound but could be improved by consistent encouragement to improve pencil control, letter formation and pride in presentation. The modelling of good writing was not a feature of the lessons observed by inspectors. Children's writing shows satisfactory achievement, with the majority on course to meet the goals expected for their age by the end of the Foundation Stage.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Mathematical vocabulary is reinforced well in lessons and number rhymes and songs help to consolidate basic number skills.
- Role-play contributes well to mathematical development.

Commentary

47. When children start in the Reception, mathematical skills are broadly in line with those expected for children of this age. Sound teaching enables satisfactory learning and steady achievement. Most children are likely to reach the goals expected for their age by the time they are ready to transfer to Year 1.
48. There is a good focus on helping children to use mathematical language confidently and develop ideas to solve problems. Most of the children can count to ten and are confident with one to one matching of numbers and sequencing. Recorded work shows that they are familiar with numbers to ten. A good proportion can recognise and name two-dimensional shapes, such as *circle*, *square* and *triangle*.

49. Activities are well matched to the needs of the children. They quickly learn a range of number rhymes and songs, consolidating their knowledge of number skills. Role-play contributes effectively to learning as children write the times of appointments at the vets. The few higher attainers count reliably beyond 10. They write and order numbers to 10 and make simple addition sentences. In a good lesson observed, the children were keen to do mathematics tasks with their teacher, they felt learning was fun and were learning through play. With encouragement from the teacher, the children made symmetrical patterns using bats and beanbags placing them on either side of a skipping rope. This activity challenged the highest attaining children and enabled them to develop good thinking skills.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have useful opportunities to explore and experiment with equipment of their choice.
- A range of interesting activities are planned to promote successful learning in this area.
- Insufficient opportunities are provided for children to experience information and communication technology.

Commentary

50. When children start in the Reception, their knowledge and understanding of the world is much the same as other children of this age. Sound teaching enables satisfactory learning and steady achievement. Most children will reach the early learning goals by the end of the Reception Year and some will exceed them.
51. A good range of activities is planned for the children to stimulate their curiosity and enhance their understanding. Cross-curricular links are a strength, particularly between language and mathematics. Children investigate mini-beasts and flowers and learn about the seasons and weather. They map their route to school and learn about people who help us. Role-play areas, for example the vet's surgery, extend learning well. During the inspection the focus was on *Going On A Bear Hunt*. The learning during these activities was good and children were able to explore and experiment with equipment of their choice. Work on display shows that the children are developing confidence with the computer, creating simple pictures, for example, and dressing teddy. In lessons, not much use was made of the computers and this is a missed opportunity to extend the children's skills. Visits to the church enable the children to extend their knowledge about baptism for example and to consider their own growth from babies into young citizens.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are provided for children to practice small manipulative skills.
- Insufficient attention has been paid by the school to making improvement to the outdoor physical environment flagged as a key issue by the previous inspection.

Commentary

52. When children start in the Reception, their physical development is average for their age. Satisfactory teaching enables satisfactory learning and achievement and most reach the goals expected by the time they transfer to Year 1. However, there has been insufficient attention paid by the school to making improvement to the outdoor physical environment flagged as a key issue by the previous inspection and this is holding back potentially better achievement. The children have no opportunity to climb, swing, slide or balance on large apparatus. Opportunities to ride on wheeled toys or scooters are limited. The school is aware that work needs to be done in order to provide a secure structured outdoor play programme and equipment. An action plan has been written which senior management now need to implement.
53. The adults work hard to help children develop their control and manipulative skills but many find pencil skills and brush control difficult. Good opportunities are provided for children to practice cutting, sticking, painting and drawing skills. All adults have good expectations of children's independence. Children dress and undress with little adult support. One gymnastic lesson and a few play times were observed during the inspection. The children were able to run, skip, hop, jump, roll and engage in free play with confidence. In the lesson observed, teaching was of good quality and led to good standards. Opportunities for children to demonstrate their skills and for others to repeat the action with increasing dexterity were key strengths in enabling good skills acquisition. The children showed that they were quite capable of moving and balancing on various body parts with control. They enjoy exercise and are aware of its effect on their bodies.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching of direct skills is combined with good opportunities for children to learn through independent activities.
- Good opportunities are provided through role-play.
- There are very good links to other areas of learning.

Commentary

54. When children start in the Reception, their creative development is average for their age. Satisfactory teaching enables satisfactory learning and achievement and most reach the goals expected by the time they transfer to Year 1. Cross-curricular links are a strength with well-chosen activities planned to extend all areas of learning. Good use is made of the role-play areas and well-timed intervention extends the play well. The imaginative play area by the two Reception classrooms is changed regularly, the children told inspectors enthusiastically about previous areas with great enthusiasm such as a bus and a boat as being two of their favourites. During a creative play activity observed by inspectors, the children were encouraged to take part in a *Bear Hunt* drama using mime, music and actions. Teachers provide a wide range of good

quality activities in drawing, painting, collage and modelling and help the children to develop personal creativity. Work on display featuring *Sunflowers* in the style of Van Gogh is of good quality. Children sing with enjoyment and enthusiasm and this too helps develop personal confidence in performing with others.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory but improving as the school's strategies take hold.
- Good teaching in Years 5 and 6 is accelerating learning for these pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour in English lessons are good.
- Pupils in Year 2 do not write at length frequently enough.
- Opportunities for extended pieces of writing in other subjects are limited.
- Handwriting and presentation skills are not as good as they should be.
- Recent initiatives in target setting and pupils' self-evaluation is positively influencing standards.

Commentary

55. Standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 6. This is a similar picture to that reported at the time of the last inspection. The achievement of boys and girls is satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as others as a result of well-focussed support. The school has introduced a number of strategies to support improvement in English, for example regular writing assessments are a very positive feature in helping teachers and managers keep a check on the progress being made by each pupil. Homework is set regularly in reading, spelling as and writing and this is extending the good partnership with parents as partners in education. The subject leader is aware of the areas ripe for improvement in the well-conceived action plan. There is good capacity for English standards to be improved as a result of this.
56. Speaking and listening skills are average overall. However, pupils' listening skills are more advanced than speaking skills in the main. Most pupils listen carefully to their teachers and other adults and follow instructions well. Teachers use questions appropriately to encourage pupils to express their thoughts and opinions and use good strategies such as *talking partners* for paired discussion. Pupils' knowledge and use of words improves steadily as they move through the school. Nevertheless by Year 6 a significant minority do not have the wide and rich vocabulary needed to express their ideas articulately. This is reflected in the quality of their descriptive writing. By contrast, the few higher attaining pupils in Year 6 comment critically on the poem *Silver* by Walter De La Mare, identifying simile and use of personification and expression with good accuracy.
57. Standards in reading are close to average. However, the range of authors that pupils are able to draw on to express their reading preferences, is rather narrow. The school has rightly identified the need to acquire more books and to review its library provision to seek a wider range of better quality resources. The use of the library for private study is currently unsatisfactory. In Year 2, higher attaining pupils read with

developing fluency, but expression is limited. Reading for higher attainers and average pupils is mostly accurate. Phonic skills are carefully taught in the infant years, enabling pupils a good strategy to help spell unknown words. These skills are built upon steadily in the junior years. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 read expressively and fluently but some lower attainers struggle to follow the shared poetry text used in a lesson observed by inspectors.

58. Standards in writing are average. Pupils in Year 2 begin to join their handwriting but a significant number of pupils in the infant years do not form letters accurately and this affects their ability to join letters correctly as they get older. Handwriting and presentation skills are inconsistent. In Year 2, pupils write news and instructions, answer questions, and sequence story events, for example, but they do not have enough opportunity to write creatively at length. Writing is developed soundly in junior classes. The good and sometimes very good teaching found in Years 5 and 6 accelerates learning for these pupils. By the end of Year 6, pupils write for a good range of purposes and audiences. Tasks include writing poetry, play scripts, persuasive arguments, letters, stories, diary entries and journalistic pieces. Higher attainers write in paragraphs and their work is generally well presented in a neat, cursive style. However, handwriting, spellings and presentation remain inconsistent across the year groups and between classes. The use of ICT as a tool to support independent written work is not fully developed.
59. The curriculum for English is suitably enhanced by the new and exciting project known as *MAP* organised by the headteacher. A large group of pupils from the junior classes are involved in creating a business plan and working as consultants to industry. This is having good impact on their literacy development by extending their skills in questioning, interviewing, decision-making and collaborative working. These lessons contribute very effectively to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as their writing skills. Achievement in the lessons observed during the inspection was very good.
60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 5 and 6 and this is reflected in the good achievement as a result of higher expectation, added challenge and the brisk pace set. Lessons are soundly planned according to the national literacy guidelines. Pupils are clear about what they are going to learn because teachers share lesson objectives with them at the beginning of a lesson. Work is usually purposeful and enjoyable. In the best lessons it stimulates and motivates the pupils so that they want to succeed. Most teachers use questioning effectively to encourage pupils to think carefully. The use of paired discussion, as in a Year 5 lesson on persuasive letter writing, is a successful strategy for sharing information and ideas and also contributes to pupils' speaking and listening skills.
61. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader, together with the headteacher, monitors planning, teaching and the work in pupils' books in order to identify strengths and weaknesses. Assessment information is used satisfactorily to plan the next steps in learning and target areas such as reading and writing. Although there are still inconsistencies in marking, this has improved during the year. In upper junior classes, for example, there is evidence of target-setting linked to marking, peer evaluation and the levelling of work against the National Curriculum criteria. Class teachers respond to peer marking and some pupils respond to teachers' comments. This is good practice that requires sharing as it enables pupils to have a good understanding of how they can improve their work. These recent initiatives are having a positive impact on standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

62. Pupils in all year groups have opportunities to use their spoken language in other subjects, through discussions, questioning and group work. However, opportunities to use extended writing skills in other subjects such as history and geography are limited. Pupils do not develop independent research and other library skills effectively as a result. The wider use of English across the curriculum is at an early stage of development and needs to be planned for, monitored rigorously and evaluated carefully if it is to have a significant impact on raising standards. ICT skills are underused for this purpose.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 6 but reflect good achievement over time.
- Mathematics is taught well overall and this leads to good quality learning in many lessons, especially in Years 5 and 6 where achievement accelerates.
- The quality of leadership is good, and management is underpinned by satisfactory procedures for assessment, target setting, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Overall, there is insufficient difference in the tasks set for pupils from different attainment groups and this lessens the challenge for potentially higher attainers.

Commentary

63. In 2004, standards in the National Curriculum tests for mathematics were well below average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. This year, standards are average at the end of both Years 2 and 6. The differences between the two years are accounted for by the different proportions of pupils in the average, below and above average groups across the two years 2004 and 2005. It is evident that pupils build knowledge, skills and understanding at the expected rate from Year 1 to Year 4. Thus, achievement is satisfactory across those year groups. Because the quality of teaching is better in Years 5 and 6, achievement accelerates to a good rate at the end of school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the other pupils and in general, there are no differences in the achievement of boys and girls or amongst pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.
64. The overall quality of teaching of mathematics is good. The variations in achievement outlined above are mirrored in the quality of teaching. Where achievement is satisfactory, teaching quality is the same; where achievement is good, so is teaching. There are several important strengths in the teaching of mathematics, not least the effective use of homework, the work of teaching assistants and the firm focus on the development of basic numeracy. A key area for improvement concerns the identification in planning of the skills, knowledge and understanding to be learned by pupils from the three main attainment groups. At present, much of the work is very similar for pupils in all three groups, especially in Years 1 to 4. This results in inconsistencies in achievement amongst higher attainers when the pitch of work is below their level, and lower attainers where the pitch is above their competencies.
65. Pupils work hard in mathematics, they show good attitudes to their work, behaviour is generally good, and lessons and pupils' past work both demonstrate that learning is productive and purposeful.
66. The leadership of mathematics is good. There has been a recent change in leadership of the subject, and the new leader is determined, hard working, and has identified sensible areas where improvement can be made. These include, firstly, assessment, which is satisfactory at present, but where desirable developments to support pupils' next steps in learning are evident. Thus, marking could be more informative about ways pupils can improve their work, and opportunities for pupils to self-evaluate their work are not frequent enough. Secondly, the mathematics target setting and tracking process is at a fairly early stage of development, with

inconsistencies in the quality of information and rigour of interpretation from class to class. Finally, monitoring and evaluation of subject performance has been less effective in the past.

67. Since joining the school, the headteacher has introduced much more firmly focused and rigorous procedures that are identifying weaknesses and strengths alike and which are linked to increasingly effective identification of subject priorities and plans of action. At present, the management of mathematics is, therefore, satisfactory, but the potential for improvement in its quality, and that of provision overall, is good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. The opportunities for pupils to consolidate and extend their mathematics skills, knowledge and understanding are satisfactory. There are useful links in science, ICT and design and technology, and basic counting and arithmetic skills are developed satisfactorily in activities such as registration and other everyday events. Overall, such links are adequate, but they could be strengthened.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are broadly average in Years 2 and 6.
- Achievement is satisfactory overall and good in Years 5 and 6
- The subject leader has a very good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and what needs to be done to boost standards and improve achievement.
- Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and pupils to learn at a brisk pace.
- The curriculum is interesting and relevant but there is not enough emphasis on science investigations.
- The lack of an effective whole school approach to assessing and recording pupils' progress and achievement limits the information that is available to staff as they plan the next stages in learning for their pupils.

Commentary

69. Standards are broadly average in Years 2 and 6. Achievement is satisfactory overall but speeds up in Years 5 and 6 and this boosts the achievement of higher, average and lower attaining pupils. Achievement is equally good for boys and girls in these year groups. Across the school pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as the other pupils.
70. Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and satisfactory in most other year groups. Where teaching is strongest the lessons are well planned and learning moves forward at a good pace. The development of a new environmentally friendly area in the school grounds is a positive focus for much learning in science during the course of this term. It gives pupils the first hand experience of analysing and collecting appropriate data, developing suitable habitats, planning the area to provide learning zones for the different age groups as well as working cooperatively together as a team. All of these are essential skills if pupils are to be fully engaged and working productively together in their science activities. In the weaker lessons these elements are missing. In the one unsatisfactory lesson observed, learning lacked an appropriate focus, was undemanding resulting in a slow pace to learning and pupils loss of interest.
71. Scrutiny of pupils' present and past work indicates that many pupils in the infants and lower juniors have limited experiences of science investigations and there is an over-

dependence on work sheets. This limits pupils' ability to work independently or to test out their ideas and record their findings in suitable ways. It also limits their opportunities to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills to support learning in science.

72. The new subject leader has a very good understanding of what has to be done to move the subject forward. He has already identified that the lack of a co-ordinated approach to tracking and recording progress and achievement is a weakness that has to be tackled without delay and has some effective starting points for developing this work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are average through the school.
- Achievement is satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.
- The quality of provision for ICT has been improved well since the time of the previous inspection.
- ICT is well led, and is managed satisfactorily.
- The development and use of ICT knowledge and skills in other subjects is not yet widespread enough.

Commentary

73. The school has made good improvement to the quality of provision in ICT. This is evident in the upgrading of resources and the accommodation; the school now has a well-equipped computer suite where most of the ICT based work is undertaken. Each class regularly uses the suite and this intensive use is making a good contribution to pupils' learning and achievement. Overall, standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 6. As for some other subjects, achievement in ICT accelerates in Years 5 and 6 from the satisfactory rate in the earlier years to a good rate overall, which ensures skills and knowledge are increased well.
74. Teachers and teaching assistants have improved their subject expertise and confidence well, and this is a positive factor in the generally good quality of provision. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the first part of school and good in Years 5 and 6. There is now a need for lesson planning to tease out more the different expectations held of pupils from the three main attainment groups. However, the insistence on good behaviour, overall good use of resources and use of homework to consolidate and extend what has been learned in lessons, are all strengths that lead to good learning. The pupils work sensibly in the main; they are productive and enthusiastic learners.
75. The advances in ICT provision are illustrative of the effectiveness of leadership in the subject. The subject leader is thorough in her work; she is influential in bringing improvement and has good expectations for the future development of ICT. She is a good role model for others. Management systems are satisfactory; monitoring and evaluation, assessment, and target tracking tend to be inconsistent and insufficiently rigorous at present. The ICT leader is keen to begin work on these priorities for improvement and the past successes in improvement to the subject suggest that the potential for the future is good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

76. The school has placed most of its development focus for ICT in equipping the good quality computer suite. Subsequent to that, effective attention was paid to the development of the subject specific curriculum for ICT. In this approach, the cross-curricular use of ICT has been rather more incidental than in many primary schools. There are some useful links between ICT and mathematics, as seen in the Year 1 lesson to produce pictograms of birds, and with science as seen in the Year 5 lesson to search a database, also about birds. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to build skills and knowledge in work that unites, for example, English, particularly writing, and ICT. The same is evident for subjects such as geography and history.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

This subject is to be inspected later this term under section 23 of the School Inspections Act 1996.

History and Geography

77. These subjects were sampled in the inspection. Standards are broadly average in Years 2 and 6 in both history and geography. There is a full curriculum in place and the staff are keen to make the subjects interesting and relevant for their pupils.
78. In history, for example, older pupils in Year 6 have a sound understanding of the impact of the depression in the 1930s and its effect on employment and family life. They are aware of the long-standing changes that were brought about in working communities as the result of this unemployment. In Years 1 and 2, there is too much dependence on work sheets and this limits the opportunities pupils have to use their literacy skills to support learning across the board.
79. In geography, Year 6 pupils have taken part in a block of work which focussed on rivers and maps. This has soundly enhanced their understanding about the features of a river from source to mouth. Mapping skills are developing satisfactorily across the school but Year 5 pupils have a limited understanding of scale. Infant pupils enjoy finding out about other places in the world as they track the travels of *Barnaby Bear*, and this topic helps them to get to grips with the conventions of maps.
80. What is missing is a whole school approach to tracking and recording pupils' progress and achievement in history and geography. This limits the information that is available to the very new subject leader as she is planning the way forward.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

81. This subject was sampled during the inspection but not in sufficient detail to provide a judgement on provision. The curriculum for art and design is planned to meet National Curriculum requirements.
82. From looking at display, pupils' sketch books, photographic evidence and a portfolio of past work gathered by the subject leader, it is evident that pupils are achieving average standards in art and design. However, in discussion with inspectors it was apparent that pupils' knowledge about the work of famous artists is quite limited and as such is an area for improvement. Pupils have the opportunity to enter an annual art competition; chosen pieces

are displayed in an exhibition at a local gallery. Parents are encouraged to go to view the work, and this has successfully raised the profile of art and design within the curriculum.

83. Pupils use a variety of techniques in their artwork, for examples colour wash, pastel work, graphite sticks and pencil sketches. In Year 4, pupils use the ICT program *Dazzle* to produce pictures in the style of Pablo Picasso. A lesson based on Matisse's, *Snail* inspired children to design and make block prints replicating snails to a satisfactory level. Year 5 pupils have created simple drawings inspired by Van Gogh's, *Starry Night and* some good work in Year 6, involving mono-printing, shows great pride in the presentation of work. Pupils have observed artefacts and traditional patterns from a variety of religions to produce collage work using a range of textures and materials. In the foyer, there are some good quality original designs of stained glass windows produced by older pupils that show aspects of the Christian faith. These are displayed alongside *divas* made as part of work on Hinduism and show well the school's effective approach to widening pupils' cultural awareness.

Design and technology

84. This subject was sampled in the inspection. Work is suitably planned for the pupils to cover work to meet National Curriculum requirements and to gain worthwhile experiences in the subject. Standards are broadly average in Years 2 and 6 in design and technology.
85. In Year 1, pupils make models of houses from plans using their own ideas, after looking closely at local houses and observing details. Pupils put their plans into practice soundly and use appropriate tools for the task. Pupils willingly talk about their models and are able to evaluate them and suggest improvements.
86. The work on *Joseph's Coat* in Year 2 shows flair and creativity in both design and the finished products. Pupils make newspaper patterns initially, cut out fabric, and enhance their individually designed coat with a variety of coloured dyes, fabric paints or other materials to create a collage. In Year 3, the design and making of picture frames shows good originality. Year 5 pupils have made good quality models of bomb shelters linked to their history topic about World War II. Additionally the work shows strong links with science. The pupils made sure their shelters were fit for purpose by carrying out fair tests that included dropping objects to replicate bombs falling and making sure their structure was resilient. Subsequent investigation of any faults resulted in the finished product being better than the original plan and this is a good feature of design and technology.
87. As yet there is no whole school approach to tracking and recording pupils' achievement in the subject. The next step for improvement, of which the school is aware, is to introduce an assessment system.

Music

88. This subject was sampled during the inspection but not in sufficient detail to provide a judgement on provision. Pupils have access to a broad range of worthwhile experiences within the subject but composition skills are an acknowledged area for development. There is now a recognised need to introduce an assessment system and to extend the resource base with instruments from different cultures that can widen pupils' musical experiences.

89. Standards in singing are above average. In assemblies and hymn practice, pupils sing tunefully, with a good sense of rhythm and pitch. There is a sense of celebration and praise on these occasions and singing contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. They sing in two parts on occasions and boys and girls perform solos with confidence. Learning opportunities are enhanced through an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities such as choir, guitar and recorder groups. A small number of pupils receive instrumental tuition for violin and clarinet from visiting specialists. From time to time the school participates in inter-schools music festivals as well as concerts and productions.

Physical education

90. This subject was sampled during the inspection but not in sufficient detail to provide a judgement on provision. The curriculum for physical education is planned to meet National Curriculum requirements. A good range of extra-curricular activities including football, netball, dance, gymnastics, basketball, cross-country and athletics enhances learning opportunities. All pupils have the opportunity for swimming lessons in Year 4 and 5, the majority achieving the required 25 metres distance award by the time they leave the school. An assessment checklist for skills is in place for physical education but the use of this information to inform planning is not fully developed. The school has identified the need for more resources in physical education in its action plan to enable high quality experiences. Staff training in gymnastics and dance is planned for later in the summer term. The school benefits from extensive outdoor spaces but the junior hall is a barren and unstimulating learning environment.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

91. This subject was sampled in the inspection. The school places the personal development of its pupils at the heart of its work and makes good provision for this area of their education. The programme is comprehensive and cross-curricular, with all teaching and non-teaching staff maintaining a consistent approach within the school's policy of promoting and rewarding positive effort and emphasising the need to consider others. Social awareness begins with the very young, who are encouraged to take turns, to share, and to show respectful attitudes. Responsibilities increase as pupils are asked to be special helpers, or school councillors, or house captains.
92. The programme for PSHCE² has been well conceived and is highly effective in preparing pupils very well for the next stage of education and later life. In areas of health and safety pupils learn about keeping safe, and how to assess risks. The school has made a start on considering healthy eating, and is pro-active in its promotion of physical activity. In 2004, the pupils took part in a recycling scheme and raised £400 for charity. Consideration of the needs of those outside school is encouraged through assemblies and charitable fund-raising, and pupils gain first-hand experience of other life-styles when for example, they link with schools in India through their *Cafod* work. Work on display includes pupils' thoughts about a world without plants and includes personal prayers to make the world safe following Tsunami. The school has plans well in hand to hold a Global Citizenship week later this term. The World Faith Day held in April provided a useful vehicle for raising pupils' multicultural awareness as well as their appreciation of the similarities between the Catholic Christian faith and other major faiths such as Sikhism and Hinduism. Such experiences are very much assisting pupils in becoming responsible future citizens.

² PSHCE refers to personal, social, health education and citizenship.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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