

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Crewe

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111342

Headteacher: Mr A Rogan

Lead inspector: Mr F P Ravey

Dates of inspection: 6 – 8 June 2005

Inspection number: 267875

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	502
School address:	Dane Bank Avenue Crewe Cheshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body]
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Wimpenny
Date of previous inspection:	March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school serves the Catholic parish of St Mary's in the town of Crewe. As a result, it takes its pupils both from the local area and from other parts of the town. The school has a much bigger number on roll than most schools nationally. This number is much the same now as it was at the time of the previous inspection. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is lower than in most schools nationally. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is similar to most schools nationally. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery class varies considerably but is below average overall. The school is a member of the Excellence in Cities (Crewe) partnership of schools, set up to raise standards. It is also part of the School Sports Co-ordinator Programme. In recent years, the school has received several awards: Basis Skills Quality Mark; Schools Achievement Award (both 2002); Investor in People (2003); Partnership Promotion School (2004); and Professional Development School (2005).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11371	Mr F Ravey	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT), Music, English as an additional language
32671	Mr C Goulding	Lay inspector	
22359	Mrs J Havard	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, Art and design
33573	Mr N Parker	Team inspector	Special educational needs, Physical education
21585	Mr A Kingston	Team inspector	English, Design and technology
19226	Mr S Flood	Team inspector	Science, Citizenship. Geography, History
27677	Mrs D Davenport	Team inspector	Mathematics

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	18
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school. An outstanding feature is how very good quality is evident in all aspects of its work. Pupils' achievement is very good overall. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Leadership and management are very good. Pupils have very good attitudes towards school and towards learning. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are above national expectations at Year 2 and Year 6.
- Pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching and the school's exciting and innovative approach to developing the curriculum.
- Very good leadership and management mean that staff and governors are very well focused upon continuously reviewing and improving school performance.
- The very good use of thorough assessment procedures has a positive impact upon teachers' planning and pupils' learning.
- Very good relationships throughout the school lead to pupils having very good attitudes and behaving very well. This forms a very effective foundation for learning.
- The school takes very good care of its pupils and fosters a very successful partnership with parents. However, relationships with the wider community, whilst satisfactory, are not as strong as other areas of partnership provision.
- The development of pupils' awareness of cultural diversity, whilst satisfactory, is not as strong as other aspects of their personal and social development.

The previous inspection, in 1999, judged the school to be very good. It has sustained this high level of performance. Standards in the Year 6 national tests have remained very largely above the national averages and the quality of teaching has improved significantly. The one key issue raised then, relating to information and communication technology (ICT) has been very successfully addressed. These positive outcomes amount to good improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Pupils' achievement is very good overall. Starting in the nursery class with attainment below that expected for their age, pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. This amounts to very good progress during their time in the school. Inspectors judged pupils' achievement to be very good in nearly half of lessons observed, with the strongest concentration of very good achievement in Years 3 to 6. Very good achievement was not confined to English, mathematics and science but was evident in eight out of the ten subjects in which lessons were observed. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, gifted and talented and those learning English as an additional language, achieved to their capabilities. The Year 6 group in 2004 had a very different attainment profile from other recent Year 6 cohorts and its lower test results reflect this. As a result, the grades relating to 2004 in the above table are not an accurate picture of standards and achievement in the school at present. Inspectors found standards to be considerably higher in Year 6 this year, being above national expectations in English, mathematics and science. In the

Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well overall with some very good achievement evident in these year groups. This leads to children reaching the nationally expected early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage and then to pupils reaching standards above national expectations in reading, writing, maths and science by the end of Year 2. Standards in ICT match those expected nationally at both Year 2 and Year 6 but pupils achieve very well in most lessons. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development are very good.** Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils show very good attitudes to school and they very behave well in lessons and in other settings around the school. This aspect is a major strength of the school. Attendance is well above the national average and is very good. Punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are good with some very good teaching evident in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. The highest proportion of very good teaching was seen in Years 3 to 6. Very good relationships throughout the school and the provision of good quality learning opportunities mean that pupils are well motivated and that they often learn very well. This is aided by the school's development of an approach to the curriculum that involves teaching several skills within a lesson or unit of work. It means that the curriculum overall is good. The school provides its pupils with very good care, guidance and support. The way in which teachers assess pupils' progress, analyse test and other information and the action they take as a result form a very effective part of this guidance and support. Partnership with parents is very effective and contributes strongly to the school's success. The school's involvement in the 'Excellence in Crewe' partnership of local schools is having a good impact upon the quality of provision and is helping to raise standards. Relationships with the wider community, whilst satisfactory, are not as strong as other areas of partnerships provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. Governance is very good. The headteacher continues to provide strong, well-focused and inspirational leadership. He is very ably supported by a dedicated and knowledgeable senior leadership team. The school's procedures for reviewing the quality of its performance are very effective. Very successful attention is paid to developing the professional skills of all staff.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents express very positive views about the school. They highlight the approachability of staff and school's fairness to their children and say that their children are very well cared for. Pupils too have very positive views of the school. This is evident both through conversations with them and by the way in which they so obviously enjoy their work.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- extend pupils' appreciation of the richness and diversity of culture in our society;
- strengthen links with the wider community

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Pupils' achievement is **very good** overall. Children in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 achieve **well**. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve **very well**. Standards are **above national expectations** by the end of Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In recent years, standards reached in national tests at Year 6 have been largely well above average.
- *Apart from 2004, standards have been almost consistently well above those of similar schools in recent years.*
- Standards in English, mathematics and science are currently above national expectations at Year 2 and Year 6.
- Pupils achieve very well overall. Achievement is strongest in Years 3 to 6.
- Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.8 (15.7)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.7 (15.7)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.1 (16.7)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 67 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.3 (28.1)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	27.6 (28.6)	27.0 (26.8)
Science	29.4 (30.4)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 87 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Over the past five years, the school's performance in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 has been well above the national average though standards in 2004 were only average compared with all schools. Well documented evidence provided by the school shows that the Year 6 cohort of pupils who took the tests in 2004 had an attainment profile very different from, and much lower than, the profiles in the previous three years. Last year's test results also showed that the standards reached by boys compared very unfavourably with those reached by girls. However, the profile for the year group shows that the boys' attainment profile was particularly low that year.
2. When performance in Year 6 national tests is compared with schools having a similar proportion of pupils receiving free school meals the picture is very similar to that when compared with all schools nationally. However, when performance is compared with schools whose pupils reached similar standards in their Year 2 national tests, a much more mixed and less favourable picture can be seen. In 2000, the 2004 Year 6 group had done particularly well in its Year 2 national tests. However, movement of pupils in and out of the

school during Years 4 to 6 had a negative impact upon the group's overall attainment profile. (Overall the 2004 Year 6 group changed by nearly 20 percent of its pupils from reception to Year 6.) In addition, a small number of pupils missed out on National Curriculum levels 4 and 5 by only one or two marks in their tests. These factors combined to make the comparison with Year 2 scores unfavourable. Overall, the trend in standards is improving again after the dip in 2004.

3. The best results in the national tests in Year 6 over the past five years have been obtained in mathematics, where, until 2004, the trend in performance had been sustained well above the national trend. In English and science, performance had also been sustained well above the national trend until 2004 but not as consistently as in mathematics.
4. The challenging targets set by the school for performance in English and mathematics Year 6 national tests for 2005 and 2006 indicate that standards should be significantly higher this year than in 2004 and that next year they should improve even more. Inspection findings support this view. Inspectors found that standards in English, mathematics and science are above the national expectation in Year 6 and that performance in mathematics remains the strongest of the three subjects. The school's detailed performance data indicate that pupils in Year 5 are on target to reach even higher standards by the end of Year 6. Inspection findings support this view.
5. The trend in performance in national tests at the end of Year 2 over the last four years divides into two equal parts. In 2000 and 2001, performance was generally well above average when compared with all schools nationally and when compared with schools with similar proportions of pupils receiving free school meals. In 2003 and 2004, performance was largely average by both comparisons. The reason for the lower performance in 2003 and 2004 lies in the profiles of the respective cohorts and is well documented by the school. Inspection findings show that standards this year are above national expectations in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
6. In other subjects, it was possible to judge standards in only information and communication technology (ICT), where pupils reach the nationally expected levels in Year 2 and Year 6. Other subjects were sampled and the evidence from this indicates that, in all of them, standards very clearly match national expectations.
7. Overall, children's attainment is below average when they start school in the nursery class. During their time at the school they make very good progress, reaching standards that are at least above average in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave Year 6. This shows that they are achieving very well, that is, they are working consistently to their capabilities in order to make very good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills.
8. In the Foundation Stage of learning, children achieve well overall and they sometimes achieve very well in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and personal and social development. Their good achievement is due to good teaching of a curriculum that encourages them to be actively involved in learning and hence to develop basic skills confidently and securely. Children make well on course to reach the early learning goals set nationally for the end of the Foundation Stage.
9. In Years 1 and 2 a similar picture is evident, with achievement being good overall and sometimes very good. Good teaching, a strong emphasis on, and the effective approach to developing pupils' basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and ICT through other subjects, are the main factors promoting good achievement and good progress in these year groups.
10. The Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 provide a firm foundation for learning upon which pupils build and flourish in Years 3 to 6. Inspectors judged achievement to be very good in nearly half of the lessons observed in Years 3 to 6. It was never less than good in the rest, leading to a judgement that achievement is very good in these year groups. This is due to

very effective teaching and to a curriculum that emphasises strongly and very effectively the development of skills across subjects as well as within individual subjects.

11. The design and successful development of the curriculum are major factors that promote very good achievement in this school. Achievement is best in mathematics, science and ICT but it is strong right across the range of subjects taught. This is made evident by the fact that out of ten subjects in which lessons were observed during the inspection, including the Foundation Stage, very good achievement was noted in eight.
12. All groups of pupils achieve equally well. Those identified by the school as gifted and talented are provided with work that increasingly stretches their learning. Those with special educational needs receive good support to help them move forward confidently to achieve their learning targets. The very few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are well supported in their work and involved fully in lessons. As a result, they achieve with the same degree of success as others of similar attainment in their classes.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Main strengths and weaknesses

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is **very good** and punctuality is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance levels are well above average
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and to their work and behave very well.
- Relationships are very good throughout the school and pupils feel valued.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their personal qualities and they willingly take on responsibilities.
- Personal, social and emotional development in the Foundation Stage is good.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good but there are too few opportunities to develop appreciation of the diversity and richness of British culture.

Commentary

13. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now well above the national average. A range of thoughtful and detailed strategies have achieved this. These include ensuring that pupils and parents are aware of the importance of continuous learning even before they enter school. The prospectus emphasises the importance of good attendance and punctuality, and parents appreciate the rigorous application of 'first day contact' in cases of unexplained absence. Very good relationships throughout the school have created a close family atmosphere where the children feel safe and therefore enjoy attending school. Most pupils arrive at school on time.

Authorised absence	
School data	4.1
National data	5.1

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.3
National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest report year 2003/4

14. Children in the Foundation Stage quickly settle into school routines and the good emphasis placed on learning to share, co-operate and relate to others has a positive impact on their personal, social and emotional development as well as upon learning in other areas of work. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' very positive attitudes contribute greatly to their personal development and achievement.

15. All groups of pupils work very well together, listening respectfully to adults and to each other. They also take pride in the presentation of their work. Relationships throughout the school are very good and pupils have a very good level of trust in the adults who work with them. This, together with the school's very caring ethos, enables all pupils to feel personally valued and to gain in confidence and self esteem. It sets the right tone for lessons, forming part of the basis upon which successful learning takes place. By the time they leave the school pupils are caring, mature and confident young people who are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
16. Behaviour in lessons, around school and in the playground is very good, a view shared by both parents and pupils. No oppressive behaviour was observed during the inspection and pupils stated confidently that, should any occur, it would be dealt with quickly and effectively. There were three exclusions last year but none during the current year and no indication of behaviour that was in any way likely to require this.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	502	3	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

17. A very strong Catholic ethos and very good opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeate all aspects of school life. The school warmly welcomes visitors and pupils are very polite, friendly and courteous towards them. Pupils' spiritual awareness is promoted very effectively through times for prayer and reflection in assemblies, in class worship, in lessons and through a good programme of personal, social and health education. The school's very clear behaviour guidelines, teachers' very high expectations of pupils' conduct and the very good example set by all staff ensure that pupils develop a strong and positive set of moral values. Pupils participate in many fund raising activities for local, national and international charities that assist their social awareness, developing their understanding of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves.
18. From an early age pupils willingly take on responsibility. As they get older they develop this further, training as play leaders, organising games and showing consideration for others during break times. Social skills and personal qualities are very effectively developed through group work in lessons, after school clubs, sporting activities and residential experiences. Visits and visitors to the school effectively develop pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures. The study of different religious faiths in assemblies and religious education lessons and of different cultures in art and humanities effectively promote pupils' respect for the values, beliefs and customs of others. However, there are insufficient planned opportunities to raise pupils' awareness of the cultural diversity found in British society today.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very good** quality of education overall. Teaching and learning are **very good** overall. The curriculum is **good** with some very good features. The school takes **very good** care of its pupils. It maintains a **very good** partnership with parents.

Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment are all **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships throughout the school provide a very good basis for learning.
- Teachers and support staff teach the school's innovative curriculum very well. This interests pupils and stimulates them to learn.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. As a result, pupils work hard and productively.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. As a result, they transmit confidence to pupils, who become confident and active learners.
- Teaching gets the best out of all groups of pupils.
- Assessment information is used very well to help pupils make progress.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 55 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	24 (43%)	27 (50%)	4(7%)	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.

19. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection, as the table below shows clearly: In 1999, teaching was judged to be mostly good; now it is judged to be very good overall. This represents good improvement.
20. Several key factors lead pupils to learn very well overall. Throughout the school, teachers and support staff provide very good conditions for learning in their lessons. A stimulating, innovative whole-school approach to designing the curriculum provides a good launching pad for teachers to plan lessons. They plan very thoroughly to make sure that all pupils are given work that challenges them to learn but does not daunt them. A strong feature of lessons is the care teachers take to make sure that pupils of different attainments have work that meets their learning needs. Teaching assistants are briefed well so that they know exactly what support to give to individual pupils or to a small group of pupils. The quality of learning activities provided is very much enhanced by the school's successful response to national initiatives which has led to key skills being developed through work in a wide range of subjects.
21. Teachers expect a great deal of effort from their pupils, including sensible attitudes to work and very good behaviour. The latter is achieved not only by good skills of managing pupils' behaviour but also by the stimulating learning tasks pupils are given. As a result, pupils want to learn and are motivated to achieve as well as they can. Because teachers are secure in the knowledge of the subjects they teach, pupils benefit from their accurate knowledge and advice. They also pick up on the enthusiasm teachers and support staff transmit to them. As a result, in many lessons pupils are very well motivated to learn.
22. Throughout the school, teaching stimulates in pupils the desire to learn. The good grounding in developing learning skills begins in the Foundation Stage, where children are supported well to take advantage of exciting opportunities to learn from 'hands-on' experiences. A good focus on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy means that children are well equipped to face the challenges of the National Curriculum in Year 1. This is achieved by their successful involvement in a wide range of practical opportunities to learn. In Years 1 and 2, this good foundation is built upon effectively. Teachers know their pupils' learning needs well and they provide stimulating opportunities for all groups of pupils so that effective learning takes place. Very occasionally teaching lacks the sparkle usually seen throughout the school and pupils, whilst progressing satisfactorily, do not learn as well as they might.
23. Whilst the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 can be seen as providing a solid foundation for learning, some of the teaching observed was of very good quality. It was characterised in

the Foundation Stage by teachers' success in getting pupils thoroughly and enthusiastically involved in discussion and then drawing out learning from this by very good use of questions. In Years 1 and 2, very well organised activities, supported to a high degree of subject proficiency, led to pupils stretching their learning to its limits. A good example of this was work in the control technology element of ICT.

24. Pupils' learning really takes off in Years 3 to 6. Nearly three fifths of lessons seen were very good and this high quality was observed in six subjects out of eight observed. Very good accommodation, significantly better than that for Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, provides pupils with a very positive basis for learning. Teachers use the light and airy, very well resourced environment very effectively to provide pupils with stimulating, challenging tasks that lead to very good learning, particularly in mathematics, science and ICT.
25. The characteristics that separate the very good from the good teaching are the extra element of challenge provide in learning tasks; the sharpness of teachers' questioning; and strength of subject knowledge.
26. All groups of pupils benefit from the high quality of teaching. Those who are gifted and talented receive an extra element of challenge not only in English and mathematics but also in subjects such as ICT and science. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. They are well supported by teaching assistants who contribute in good measure to their overall achievement. The few pupils from minority ethnic groups are very well integrated into lessons and achieve as well as others of similar attainment. The very few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are provided with good support and benefit equally from the very good conditions for learning the school provides.
27. Teachers employ a range of very good assessment strategies during lessons and the results are very effectively used to help them in their future planning. Assessment files are handed on to the next class teacher, detailing current standards, assessments, targets and achievements. This helps to ensure that teachers know their pupils' learning needs accurately from the start of the school year. Pupils are aware of how they can improve their learning. Their records of achievement show very effectively the progress they make. These files are shared with parents who have the opportunity to discuss the assessments with class teachers, further strengthening the link with home. Assessments in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are developing well with those in ICT and physical education particularly successful in highlighting pupils' progress and helping teachers plan the next steps in learning.

The curriculum

The school provides all its pupils with a **good** curriculum that is planned very well to help pupils develop their skills. Opportunities for enrichment are **very good**. Accommodation and resources are **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planned links between subjects help pupils develop key learning skills very well.
- The school has a strong and very effective focus on helping every pupil to get the most out of their education.
- The curriculum is very effectively enriched by a programme of additional activities outside of lessons.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is good.

Commentary

28. The good progress made in developing the curriculum at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained. Very effective emphasis is placed on responding to a recent national initiative to develop key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT through programmes of work linked across several subjects. This is having a very positive effect on pupils' learning, especially in Years 3 to 6, where the use of such programmes is particularly good. Very effective curricular planning ensures that key skills are developed rigorously and in a way that ensures they improve quickly. As a result of all of this, learning is very good, pupils obviously enjoy their work and benefit greatly from it.
29. Careful planning of lessons means that all pupils have equal chances to learn and to take part in all aspects of school life. A policy of early identification of special educational needs, combined with well focused individual education plans, helps pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. The curriculum also caters effectively for pupils identified as able, gifted or talented – and in Years 3 to 6 this provision is very effective due to very effective planning that ensures pupils are stretched in their learning. A good programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and self esteem, allowing them to explore issues in a cooperative and reflective way. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are few in number but where additional provision needs to be made it is. As a result, all groups of pupils have an equal chance to benefit from their education.
30. The extensive opportunities for enrichment that are offered beyond the school day are a major strength of the school. These include a wide range of activities run by school staff and are supplemented by the close links the school has built up with outside expertise through local contacts and involvement with the 'Excellence in Crewe' initiative. Pupils have the opportunity to play a range of musical instruments, participate in sporting events such as judo and gymnastics and attend nature and drama clubs. A careful system of monitoring ensures the opportunity to be involved is available for all pupils, and many take good advantage of it.
31. The school makes good use of its staff, accommodation and resources for learning. The buildings and grounds are bright, clean and well maintained. The nursery unit is attractive and spacious and has good provision for outdoor play. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' learning has greatly benefited from recent refurbishment to their building, and there are separate and well equipped ICT, music and resources rooms as well as a library and disabled toilet facilities. Although two of the classes are in mobile classrooms, they are well maintained and adequate. By contrast, the building used by children in reception and by pupils in Years 1 and 2, although well maintained, is cramped and has few specialist facilities. However, all areas of the school are enhanced by attractive displays which celebrate the pupils' work across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

The levels of care, support and guidance provided for pupils are **very good**. The school pays **good** attention to pupils' views, involving them in decision making whenever it can.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is a very happy and caring community where staff provide very good levels of care based on strong Catholic principles.
- Staff form close and trusting relationships with pupils.
- Arrangements to help new pupils settle in are very good.
- The school council plays an important part in helping pupils to become involved in decision-making.
- The school ensures that the children learn in a healthy and safe environment.

32. The school takes very good care of its pupils. They are looked after by attentive and caring staff who ensure that their well being is of paramount importance. Although this is a large school, a strong community spirit within it means that individual achievements are celebrated by all and individual needs are understood and respected. In lessons, pupils respect each other, share resources and cooperate very well so that classrooms are calm and focused on learning. Pupils are proud of their school. The many activities that are run after school reflect the care and strong involvement by staff to ensure that pupils develop to their potential.
33. Because staff know pupils very well as individuals they are able to quickly identify any need for additional individual support. Staff are always readily available so pupils have every opportunity to talk over their problems with people they respect and trust. The very effective assessment of pupils' needs allows teachers to give meaningful and pertinent guidance where needed so that pupils are trusting of all staff and are confident that they will always be treated fairly.
34. Parents rightly perceive that staff look after their children very well and state confidently that the school's arrangements for welcoming new pupils are very well thought out. The prospectus contains a wealth of information and several of the school's policies on, for instance, attendance and behaviour, are very well presented within this for the new parent. The easy availability of staff at the start and end of each school day ensures that any emerging problems can be quickly discussed and resolved.
35. The school council was not in existence during the last inspection but has since developed into an effective resource that is important to pupils. Under the guidance of a teacher, council members have developed the role of 'play leaders', suggested the installation of 2 'bud benches' for pupils with no one to play with and have developed a campaign against bullying. The council have a very good understanding of the reasons for the existence of a school council and are gaining in confidence to show their independence.
36. The school has robust and effective procedures which ensure that child protection issues are well established, with regular training in place and good links with other agencies. The responsible governor and the site manager regularly inspect the school for health and safety issues and any faults identified are quickly put right.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents think very highly of the school.
 - The school keeps parents fully informed about all of its work
 - Annual reports on their children's progress are very clear.
 - Links with other schools and colleges result in particularly good opportunities in sport.
37. Parents have a very high regard for the school, believe that the staff are approachable and fair and that their children are being very well cared for in an environment free from bullying and harassment. The school has a genuine 'open door' policy that encourages all parents to become involved in their children's education. The school also runs courses for parents on how literacy and numeracy are now taught. These courses help parents play an active part in their children's education.
 38. The school keeps parents very well informed of day-to-day events and regularly consults them on various issues. A newsletter is sent out every two weeks. It contains dates for diaries, details of school visits and requests for parental help, such as help with the tuck shop. Parents appreciate this level of information and respond by assisting in lessons and

participating in the activities run by the Friends', Parents' and Teachers' Association. Parents are also consulted on issues and developments such as a recent questionnaire on the viability of a pre- and after- school care and holiday club. They report that their views are acted upon.

39. Parents believe that they are very well informed about their children's progress and the future targets that their children have to achieve. The annual reports that parents receive are comprehensive, written in appropriate language, clearly state what the child can and cannot do and also give very clear indications on what level the child is attaining in relation to national standards for their age. The 'next steps' sections of the report also give very clear targets that are individual, challenging and attainable.
40. The school is a keen participant in sporting activities and these are enhanced by good links with other schools and colleges who provide tuition, facilities and competition for the pupils. The school has many after school activities that parents and pupils value. Its ethos is built around firm Christian beliefs and close links with the local Catholic church and the parish priest playing an active part in the pupils' development. Links with other religious and multi-cultural groups however are not fully exploited and developed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are **very good**. Governance is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership and management of the headteacher are at the heart of the school's success.
- The deputy headteacher and key staff work very well with the headteacher to monitor and improve the work of the school.
- The governing body is very effective and plays a full part in the life of the school.
- Very good opportunities are afforded for staff to continue developing their professional skills.

Commentary

41. The headteacher is very committed to the school and provides inspirational leadership. He plays a full part in the daily life of the school, knows every pupil by name and has a very good understanding of pupils' personal development. Parents appreciate his hands-on knowledge and pupils greatly value his praise. His skills are well complemented by those of the deputy headteacher and other members of the school's leadership team. Together they form a very strong and effective team. The headteacher provides a very good example of how to manage effectively. He has a relentless focus upon the pupils' and school's achievement which is clearly evident in the school's strategic planning and which promotes its ambitions and goals most effectively. Effective teams have been created to support school improvement, curriculum delivery, assessment and tracking and pupils' attainment. Self-evaluation is rigorous and effective, and the school makes good use of the information collated, to shape future planning. The headteacher deploys staff carefully and ensures an appropriate workload for each member of staff. New teachers settle quickly into the school because they are valued, welcomed into the school community and supported very well in learning to understand the school's systems and priorities. All of these strategies produce a very positive ethos in the school, with the emphasis on staff, pupils and parents co-operating together to improve the work of the school.
42. All teachers with leadership roles fulfil them well. The monitoring, management and leadership of English, mathematics, science and ICT provide information that is used well to identify strengths and weaknesses and this is helping to raise standards. Very effective

use is made of the analysis of tests and assessments to improve standards. A good example of this is the importance the school has placed on raising boys' attainment in English and the positive impact it is having. The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides good leadership and management. She manages the timetable for all teaching assistants effectively and also conducts their performance management interviews. This ensures they are well trained and maximum use is made of their skills. The coordinator and the governor who takes responsibility for overseeing special educational needs' provision meet on a regular basis to monitor its effectiveness.

43. Governors play a very active part in whole school planning and in the monitoring of the school improvement plan. They support the headteacher very effectively in shaping the vision and direction of the school. Carefully organised committees take full part in the decision making process and are led well. Governors fulfil all of their statutory duties and have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The monitoring by the governors of the school's performance management systems is particularly good. Through this they both challenge and support the headteacher in his work.
44. Very high commitment to continued professional development is evident in the school. This is very well structured and very effective in helping to raise standards and in creating an exciting and relevant curriculum. It focuses upon the needs of the school and individual staff as identified through the school's rigorous and effective process of self-evaluation and performance management. A good example of this is the action the school took to strengthen the role that ICT plays in teaching and learning across the curriculum. It was evident throughout the whole of the inspection that this identified priority was being met very successfully and that the in-service had indeed been well targeted. The impact of the school's programme of professional development is closely monitored, evaluated and reviewed through classroom observation, scrutiny of pupils' work and through the school improvement plan. The school provides very good support for initial teacher training and gives students a wonderful opportunity to observe and learn from very good practice.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1057871	Balance from previous year	19242
Total expenditure	1065400	Balance carried forward to the next	11713
Expenditure per pupil	1952		

45. Financial management is very good. Clear evidence exists of the school's commitment to the implementation of its 'Best Value Statement', with all financial decisions based firmly on accurately identified educational priorities. This is clearly reflected in the allocation of resources. Taking into account the below average expenditure per pupil and the very good overall effectiveness of the school, the school continues to give very good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

46. From a below average starting point on entering the nursery children achieve well in all six areas of learning and by the time they start Year 1 most have reached the nationally expected standards in all these areas. Children identified as having special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language also achieve well. This is because of good and sometimes very good teaching in the nursery and the reception classes. Teaching is good overall. Staff share a common vision of providing a stimulating and creative learning environment at the same time as maintaining the rigour to raise standards. Teachers and support staff work very successfully together to put this into practice. Achievement is aided by an imaginative curriculum planned in such a way that all children are included, supported and challenged. Assessment is being properly undertaken in accordance with the Foundation Stage Profile. Tracking of the children's progress is good.
47. Very good links are maintained with parents. Children settle into school very well because of the sensitive way staff adapt procedures to suit the needs of parents and their children through this starting period. Parents very much appreciate the high level of support and communication that the school fosters with them through informal meetings and a home/school diary. Leadership and management are good because of the co-ordinators considerable teaching expertise, knowledge of the curriculum and enthusiasm. This has enabled good improvement to be made since the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and are happy in school because of good and very good teaching, the very good induction programme and the support, care and respect shown for each child.
- Children develop positive attitudes towards learning
- Staff provide a wide range of exciting activities to enhance personal, social and development, enabling children to gain confidence and to work independently and collaboratively.
- Relationships are very good and have a very positive impact on children's learning.

Commentary

48. This area of learning receives a high profile when the children enter the nursery. Staff are very good at helping children to settle in quickly, feel secure and begin learning. This effective support, care and respect are continued in the reception classes. As a result, children achieve well and reach the early learning goals rapidly, with a significant minority likely to exceed them before the end of the reception year. Through very good teaching and well-planned, exciting learning environments, children develop very good relationships with adults and other children as they explore the learning opportunities available in and out of the classroom. They adapt well to routines and this is evident in the way they listen and participate in activities.
49. Behaviour is good overall and the children have positive attitudes towards learning. Through very well planned imaginative play and other activities children learn how to co-operate and persevere in their tasks. They respond well to routines and many settle with the minimum of fuss, helped by the very good relationships fostered by all staff. By the time they leave the nursery class, most share and take turns. Children are encouraged by staff to take responsibility. They become confident at working independently on their tasks

in preparation for the more formal routines in Year 1. At all times children's confidence is boosted by praise and encouragement. As a result they make good progress and achieve well.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to children achieving well.
- The emphasis on speaking and listening skills in the nursery is good.
- Reading and writing skills are developed well Throughout the Foundation Stage
- The opportunities offered to higher attaining children successfully extend their learning.
- Teaching assistants are well informed and make a significant contribution to learning.

Commentary

50. Although attainment on entry is below average, especially in speaking and listening, good teaching enables the children to make good progress and achieve well. As a result, most reach the early learning goals by the end of reception. When children start in the nursery a small but significant number lack confidence in expressing their thoughts and every opportunity taken to encourage them to talk and listen. This has a very positive impact, with children making good progress, and most speaking with increasing confidence and good articulation. The emphasis on developing good communication skills is continued successfully in the reception classes.
51. The development of reading is a high priority. Teachers plan carefully to develop children's reading skills. As a result, all children make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage, learning to enjoy reading as they develop the basic skills. Higher attaining children are provided with just the right amount of extra challenge to help them gain the most from their learning. Through the home reading scheme and extra activities, parents are fully involved in their children's learning. This has a positive impact on their overall achievement.
52. The practice of early writing skills is included in many activities and children are encouraged to write for a good range of purposes. Good support helps them to develop good pencil control, good letter formation and an ability to express their thoughts in writing.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching strategies successfully encourage mathematical development.
- Parents and support staff provide very good support for the children's learning.

Commentary

53. Children make rapid progress from the time they start in the nursery. They achieve well because they receive good, practically focused teaching. The children experience a range of interesting opportunities to use mathematics in practical ways and across all areas of learning. Because of this, most reach the standards expected for their age. In a knowledge and understanding lesson, for example, the reception children could name three-dimensional shapes with confidence when creating a school plan. When teaching becomes very good, an extra element of urgency is added to the lesson to keep children

'on their toes' with exciting learning opportunities. Parents are fully involved in the children's learning, successfully supporting activities once a week. For example a very good lesson was observed when parents ably supported the children learning facts about money.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, leading to good achievement.
- Staff provide a wide range of cross-curricular activities and experiences to develop curiosity and stimulate interest.
- Good opportunities for imaginative play help children's learning.
- The children are achieving well in this area of learning.

Commentary

54. Most children reach the early learning goals by the end of reception. Staff provide a wide range of exciting, well-structured activities that considerably widen the children's experience and develop their knowledge and understanding. The children demonstrate a curiosity and a keen interest in their surroundings. There are many well-planned opportunities for the children to use their senses to investigate materials. The school environment is used to very good effect, with teachers taking the children on treasure hunts, trails and expeditions to observe the school and local surroundings. This practical emphasis prepares children well for their transition to Year 1. The development of the appropriate ICT skills is also evident in children's plans of the school buildings and in their confident use of computers.

Physical development

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good outdoor provision contributes very well to children's physical development.
- Good teaching of skills is having a positive impact on learning
- The children handle tools and equipment with growing control and dexterity.

Commentary

55. When using large apparatus to develop their physical skills, children make good progress overall with a significant number making very good progress and these children reach standards beyond those expected for their age. Provision in the outdoor play area for the nursery children is very good. It includes a wide range of opportunities that support their developing physical skills and is used to very good effect. Although the reception classes do not have direct access to the well resourced play area they use it on a regular basis and they make very good use of the patio area outside their own classrooms.
56. Teaching and learning of manipulative skills is good. A good range of activities successfully develops the children's fine motor skills through the use of scissors, paintbrushes, crayons and small construction equipment. They clearly enjoy these activities and try hard to achieve their best. Children have opportunities to use the hall and playgrounds for physical education lessons and they make the most of these, developing good control and co-ordination, good concentration and an ability to follow instructions.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are provided for children to express their ideas through a variety of materials, media and colour. As a result, they make good progress.
- Imaginative play areas successfully encourages imaginative activities and language development

Commentary

57. Children are given a good range of both free and guided opportunities to develop their creative skills. As a result they make good progress and many reach the early learning goals by the end of reception. Teaching is good. Teachers have successfully adapted the classrooms and outdoor play areas to ensure children have the opportunity to explore media and materials, participate in music and develop imagination. Very good links to other areas of learning help children develop their skills further. For example, during a topic on summer time the reception children created paintings and drawings of ladybirds and flowers to very good effect. Children enjoy singing and playing with percussion instruments.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved are above those expected nationally for each age group.
- Teaching is good overall, with very good teaching of older pupils.
- All pupils make very good progress from a wide range of starting points.
- The teaching of literacy skills through other areas of the curriculum is imaginative and exciting.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning.
- Subject leadership and management are good overall with particular strengths in management.

Commentary

58. From a lower than average starting point on entry to the school, pupils make very good progress resulting in standards of attainment which are above national expectations At the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Maintaining standards above national levels since the previous inspection amounts to good improvement.
59. The quality of teaching is good overall and in Years 4 to 6 it is sometimes very good. Where there is very good teaching, achievement is very good. This was seen, for example, in a Year 6 lesson where the teacher used very good strategies to involve pupils in the discussion of Shakespeare's setting for Macbeth. The teacher's enthusiasm, knowledge of the subject and questioning skills ignited the pupils' interest, especially that of the boys, one of whom, following a group discussion, made the observation that, *"It's romantic - streams, clearings, ferns and magic. He talks about the moonlight shifting and shivering and about love being complicated."*
60. Teachers show good subject knowledge and plan lessons with clear intentions which are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and then used to evaluate learning in very useful final review sessions. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They are well informed by the teachers and provide a good level of support, well matched to individual learning needs. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and approach to work. These expectations, together with the brisk pace shown in most lessons and the systematic planning which matches work to need, enable pupils to make the most of their learning opportunities. Although there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking of pupils' written work the best is demanding of high standards. It is encouraging, appreciative and moves learning on.
61. Standards in speaking and listening are above national expectations. Teachers make extensive and effective use of discussion across all areas of the curriculum, encouraging pupils to express themselves and to talk about what they have learned. This results in pupils growing in confidence, using language well and becoming fluent conversationalists who can explain, describe and justify their point of view. It has a very positive impact on the standard of pupils' writing.
62. The skills of letter recognition and reading are systematically developed from the start. This helps pupils to develop an appetite for reading that is fostered through the availability of a good range of books and the close links between home and school. Pupils develop a variety of strategies for recognising words and soon progress to using context to supply meaning. The outcome is that by the time pupils reach Year 6 they are fluent readers who read for pleasure and can hold the attention of an audience when reading aloud. They carefully choose the books they read, know who their favourite authors are and can

explain why they like particular books. Older pupils are good finding information quickly from reference books.

63. Standards in writing are above the national expectation at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is because teachers provide many interesting opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes and have high expectations of what the pupils will achieve and how well they present their work. Pupils are successfully encouraged to see themselves as authors and produce their own well structured stories, sometimes in booklets with a cover design and book review. These are well presented using very neat handwriting and illustrations. Year 2 pupils are enthusiastic writers. Their sentence structure and use of punctuation such as question and exclamation marks are good. They also show a growing awareness of and competency in the use of dialogue in their stories to add interest. Teachers in the Year 1 and Year 2 classes prepare the ground well for the quality of writing evident in pupils' work in Years 3 to 6 by ensuring that basic skills are learnt well. In Year 6, pupils show a good understanding of structure in a wide and exciting range of writing activities and organise their thoughts with clarity. Their writing is often imaginative, well considered and coherent, making meaning clear. Some of the pupils' writing is 'published' in hardback as in the case of a very descriptive piece of work based on 'The Captain's Log Book' which harnesses together fact and fiction extremely well.
64. Pupils' very good attitudes towards their work are the result of the very good conditions for learning that teachers create, and this makes a significant impact on their achievement. All pupils are well behaved, listen intently and have the confidence to ask and answer questions which enables them to make valuable contributions during lessons. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good.
65. As a result of effective checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment, the subject leader has identified specific areas for development. For example, she has accurately identified the need to raise boys' attainment and has introduced a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books to capture their imagination and interest along with developing with other key staff a series of research based Study Units. Both initiatives have been successful. Pupils' progress is tracked very effectively and reviewed often. The resulting information is used effectively to set targets for improvement and to plan programmes of study to increase the rate of learning for specific groups of pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. This is a strength of provision. Keenly aware of pupils' language needs, the school works very hard and effectively to promote language and literacy skills in all subjects. Examples include labelled diagrams in science, recounts of historical events and geography visits and persuasive writing related to environmental issues. Additionally, the school's innovative response to the national initiative to improve the primary school curriculum has prompted the development of interesting and exciting thematic 'Study Units'. These provide pupils with excellent opportunities to practise, apply and extend their literacy skills in purposeful and meaningful ways across the curriculum. Pupils use ICT well to enhance their literacy work as they prepare reports, draft and improve their writing using word processing and use computer programs and the internet for research and to assist in spelling.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above those expected nationally and pupils achieve very well.

- Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils' very good attitudes to their work have a positive impact on their learning.
- The very good use of information and communication technology effectively enhances pupils' learning.
- Assessment systems are very good, although teachers' written marking does not always let pupils know how to improve their work.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

67. There has been good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 since the last inspection. This, together with the challenging tasks set to enable pupils to work to the best of their capabilities, and the very effective use of information and communication technology to support and extend pupils' learning, has contributed in great measure to very good achievement by Year 6. Teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 are good and as a result, pupils achieve well. With the exception of 2004, when the Year 6 group of pupils was of lower attainment overall, standards in mathematics have risen steadily and consistently since the previous inspection. They are now rising again. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is good.
68. All groups of pupils make very good progress and achieve very well during their time in the school. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a wide range of activities that meet the needs of all and effectively build on their previous learning. All mathematical concepts are well covered, with strong emphasis on the teaching of basic number skills and the development of mental strategies. Pupils respond very well to the quick fire mental calculations and mathematical games at the beginning of each session, which effectively sharpen their mental skills and reinforce learning. Pupils are very successfully challenged to apply this knowledge and understanding to problem solving activities. Most talk with great enthusiasm about their work, which they find interesting and fun, and they are well motivated by the good use of resources to support learning. Teachers throughout the school are skilled at drawing all pupils into the whole class sessions by adapting questions to suit pupils' individual needs and this ensures that pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all parts of the lesson. These pupils are very well supported by well briefed teaching assistants, who clarify instructions, develop thinking skills and keep pupils on task, thus helping them to make good progress in lessons.
69. Where teaching is very good, in Years 3 to 6, teachers' very challenging questions, clear explanations and very effective demonstrations ensure that all pupils clearly understand different methods of calculation, as for example, in the plotting of co-ordinates in four quadrants in a Year 6 lesson. The very good use of information and communication technology is firmly embedded in numeracy lessons, supporting very effectively the school's approach to developing learning key skills through work in other subjects. This has a very positive effect on pupils' achievement. Time is managed very well and the teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work rate result in very good pace and productivity in learning. However, very occasionally pupils in Years 1 and 2 become restless when the teacher talks for too long or when work lacks appropriate challenge.
70. Teachers and teaching assistants use praise and encouragement well to reward pupils' efforts and to develop their confidence and self esteem. This has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and learning. A good range and amount of homework reinforces and extends learning beyond the school day.
71. As at the last inspection, leadership and management are very good. The subject leader is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic and supports colleagues very well. She has a very clear view of strengths and weaknesses in the subject and a very effective action plan focused on raising standards and achievement further. The school has very rigorous assessment systems and information gained from these is used very effectively to set

targets, track pupils' progress and help shape teachers' planning. However, teachers' written marking is not always used well enough to inform pupils about how to improve their work. Resources are good and used well to support learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Pupils use and consolidate their mathematical skills well in other subjects. For example, they measure forces in science, use grid references in geography, interpret time lines in history and use shape and measurements in art and design and design and technology. Information and communication technology is used very well to support and enhance teaching and learning, for example, when pupils in Year 2 plot co-ordinates and those in Year 6 explore the properties of quadrilaterals and other two-dimensional shapes.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of pupils' work seen are above those expected nationally for their age at Year 2 and Year 6.
- Overall, pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are good but in Years 3 to 6 they are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- The leadership of the subject is good.
- The curriculum is very considerably enriched by the use of well-chosen study units but overall, investigative activities are under-developed

Commentary

73. In Years 3 to 6, pupils achieve very well due to the consistently very good quality of teaching. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection and is due to the introduction of a wider range of investigative experiences for pupils. Lessons are characterised by a very secure subject knowledge that enables teachers to teach with high levels of enthusiasm, a clear structure and a high level of challenge for pupils of all abilities. High expectations for both work rate and behaviour ensure pupils make the most of their learning opportunities. Teachers make very effective use of ICT resources to stimulate pupils' interest. They plan a range of very good experiences that very successfully increase pupils' levels of understanding.
74. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to deepen their learning through discussing ideas with a 'response partner'. Teachers further stimulate pupils' desire to learn by good use of the school grounds, to provide observational opportunities for pupils within projects that study animals within their habitats. Homework is used very effectively to reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in Year 6. Assessment systems are used very effectively to set targets for improvement and track pupils' progress. However, marking of pupils' work does not consistently let pupils know what they need to do to improve.
75. Throughout the school, pupils are given tasks that are well matched to their learning needs. As a result, they work productively and achieve at least well. Teaching assistants are well briefed by teachers and as a result they give pupils good support. Links to other subjects in order to support learning are strong and add to pupils' enjoyment of their learning. For example, pupils in Year 2 linked the study of birds to a poetry and art project. Pupils are encouraged to raise questions and seek answers, and they do so confidently. For example - how do spiders walk? What do ducks eat? This has a good impact on standards in science, literacy and geography.

76. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils help to create very good conditions for learning. Pupils work very hard, display high levels of concentration and show a high degree of respect towards adults and fellow pupils.
77. The school's analysis of test results indicated a need to widen the range of investigative experiences for pupils and the subject leader has arranged training and provided support packs for all teachers. This initiative is already helping to raise standards. However, the strategy has yet to be consistently implemented. The subject leader has a secure understanding of current strengths and weaknesses. Checking the consistency of assessing pupils' work against National Curriculum levels is helping teachers to be consistent in their teacher assessments. Visits to a local wildlife initiative and to the astronomical centre at Jodrell Bank, together with strong links with the local high school enrich the curriculum very effectively. The quality and range of resources has improved well since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has very successfully addressed the issues raised at the last inspection.
- All groups of pupils achieve very well overall because of major strengths in teaching and in the organisation of the curriculum.
- Teachers' confidence and expertise in teaching ICT is very good.
- The use of ICT as a means of developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in other subjects is at least very good and sometimes excellent.
- Very good resources contribute strongly to pupils' high achievement.

Commentary

78. The previous inspection report identified ICT as an area requiring significant improvement. Since that time very good improvements have been made. Standards have improved and are now at the nationally expected levels overall at Year 2 and Year 6, with a significant number of pupils in Years 5 and 6 reaching standards above those expected nationally. This has been achieved by very close and successful attention to developing teachers' subject expertise and hence improving their confidence in teaching the subject. It has also been influenced strongly by the school's very successful development of the curriculum for ICT to align it with national initiatives for developing key learning skills across all subjects. Very good improvement in the quality and range of resources, including the very effective use of laptop computers, is also a significant factor influencing improvement.
79. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers plan very effectively in order to match the development of skills in ICT with those in other key areas such as numeracy, literacy and science. But this very successful planning goes further, to the extent of weaving together the development of key skills with the development of knowledge, skill and understanding in other subjects such as history and geography. Teachers' strengths in subject knowledge are made particularly clear when they devote lessons to the development of the skills of ICT themselves, for example, in teaching pupils to send and receive e-mails. Very good relationships are maintained with pupils and very effective support for learning is provided in lessons, both by teaching assistants and by a support teacher. This very good provision of staffing resources is also a major factor contributing to the subject's success.
80. As a result of these strengths in teaching and provision, pupils learn very quickly and achieve very well. It was noticeable in several lessons how much gifted and talented pupils, for example, were challenged very effectively by the complexity and demand in the

tasks designed for them, evidence also of teachers' high expectations. However, all groups of pupils are provided with suitably challenging work and effective support and, in a learning environment made highly effective by the quality of relationships and resources, all are stretched to achieve as well as they can. This is also evident in class lessons when small groups of pupils use computers to extend their learning.

81. Subject leadership and management are very good. The subject co-ordinator leads colleagues by the very good example of her own teaching and also through the structures put in place to help them develop their skills. She has introduced a successfully developing system for checking pupils' progress and has a very clear understanding of where the subject stands at present and how to improve it further. The school has a clear rationale for teaching ICT, aiming to ensure the subject is embedded in teaching and learning across the curriculum. In this it is becoming very successful and is certainly promoting both 'excellence' and 'enjoyment'.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. The use of ICT to motivate and help pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in other subjects is excellent and a major strength of the school's approach to teaching the curriculum. It is particularly successful in mathematics but also works very well in literacy and science as well as in other subjects. Teachers use ICT as a means of sparking pupils' desire to learn, for example, by researching the Internet in history, by developing their skills of mathematics and geography in directing a floor robot from one place to another (and using simple co-ordinates in Year 2 to do this) and by enriching pupils' appreciation of the work of William Shakespeare and developing their writing skills. Indeed, the word 'enrich' captures precisely how the school uses ICT as a means of stimulating pupils' imagination and desire to learn right across the curriculum – and it does this very successfully.

HUMANITIES

83. During the inspection **geography** and **history** were sampled and no overall judgement can be made about provision. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils indicate that standards of work are at the levels expected nationally. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
84. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are very enthusiastic about their previous learning and accurately identify rivers, oceans, continents, capital cities and points of the compass. They very much enjoy the school's approach to teaching the skills of geography through other subjects. Visits arranged by the school help pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding.. Pupils recall a range of historical projects that include the Aztecs, Tudors, Victorians, Explorers, Vikings and Romans. The Roman project particularly excited pupils, with a visit to Chester and a day guided by a 'Roman soldier'. As a result of these stimulating projects pupils have developed a secure knowledge of events within different historical periods and an appreciation of the contrasting conditions of living between now or in the past.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

85. All subjects in this curriculum area were sampled during this inspection. As a result, only a small number of lessons were seen and no judgements are made about overall provision or about the quality of teaching and learning in them.
86. It is evident that **art and design** is a high priority in the school and is used well to stimulate pupils' learning. In the work seen, pupils reached standards above the levels expected nationally for their age. Pupils' critical appreciation of artists is well established. This is developed very well in Years 3 to 6. Teaching is stimulating and challenging but at the same time offers thoroughly enjoyable learning. Pupils are offered opportunities to work in

a range of media but on the same theme. They respond well to this. Strong emphasis is placed on linking art and design to other subjects and this is done very successfully. For example, pupils in Year 3 worked well together to produce collages, paintings and models of volcanoes in geography. Work is displayed about the school in an imaginative and interactive way. Pupils are left in no doubt that their efforts are valued.

87. Work in **design and technology** is linked well to other areas of the curriculum and as a result it is purposeful and meaningful. Good emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' understanding of the process of designing and making. Pupils have sufficient opportunities to evaluate and modify their work and so improve on their design. Work in food technology is linked effectively to the science topic on healthy living and eating.
88. In **music**, the school provides a good range of activities that enrich the curriculum outside lessons. These include specialist instrumental teaching for a few pupils; a choir for pupils in Years 4 to 6; and a range of educational visits and visitors to the school. The school participates in a good number of musical events. Last year, these included a visit to London to sing at the Royal Albert Hall, and a choral performance at the neighbouring college of higher education. Strong links are maintained with the local parish through the choir singing at parish liturgical events. A current action plan for subject development and a summary financial statement show that management is at least efficient. Pupils in Year 6 reached standards that match national expectations when singing and then creating an atmospheric opening to a song to be performed in the near future at a local schools' event. Good teaching enabled pupils to achieve well at their tasks.
89. In **physical education**, the quality of teaching and learning was good overall in lessons seen and standards were at nationally expected levels. Lessons were well structured and the activities carefully chosen to develop skills. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good and this enables them to make helpful points that improve pupils' learning and achievement. Being asked to demonstrate good practice to their others makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development as well as providing them with good opportunities to learn from each other.
90. In a lesson with an athletics focus, pupils were made aware of the benefit of aerobic exercise on their health, and links with the music curriculum were made in a dance session. A register of gifted and talented includes twenty pupils with exceptional skills in physical development. These pupils are provided with good opportunities to enhance their development especially through close links with outside sporting agencies.
91. A good range of resources and expertise support learning effectively. This includes a School Sports Coordinator based at the local secondary school and it has a significant impact in supporting both the range and quality of provision. The school's study support programme of enrichment activities has a beneficial impact on progress. The school's focus on the importance of physical development is evident through a very good range of activities outside lessons. For example, at lunchtimes trained school meals supervisors offer a 'Fit Kids' club and pupils from Years 5 and 6 train as play leaders to teach new games to younger pupils.
92. Leadership and management is good, with a well qualified specialist leading by example. The teaching of physical education is monitored and feedback given to improve standards. A pupil skills assessment scheme is effectively tracking progress in some years and there are good plans to extend this to the rest of the school from September 2005.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

93. The school views personal development as highly important and provides good opportunities for pupils to learn respect for the values, attitudes and beliefs of others as well as developing their own self worth and confidence. The outcomes of the school's

approach can be seen in the very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development of its pupils. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves provide an atmosphere in which pupils can openly address sensitive issues that affect their lives. For example, during a 'Circle Time' session, Year 5 pupils were confident enough to share concerns about how their emotions change as they grow older. Pupils took part enthusiastically yet were sensitive to individual needs, displaying confidence and maturity in their relationships with others.

94. The subject is embedded in the whole curriculum and taught in a structured way resulting in well planned lessons. Rules of good behaviour are displayed in every classroom and although pupils have specific workbooks for personal, social and health education there are also good links across several subjects to support and enhance the development of skills. The school has an active school council that helps pupils develop some of the skills associated with being good citizens.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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