

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST MARY'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Islington, London

LEA area: Islington

Unique reference number: 100446

Headteacher: Miss W Rudge

Lead inspector: Mr S Hill

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> April 2005

Inspection number: 267884

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: 192

School address: Fowler Road  
Islington  
London  
Postcode: N1 2EP

Telephone number: 0207 359 1870  
Fax number: 0207 359 3812

Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of Mrs H Maunsell  
governors:

Date of previous 9<sup>th</sup> June 2003  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average-sized Church of England school catering for pupils aged from 4 to 11. It serves a multi-ethnic community in Islington. Pupils' socio-economic circumstances cover a wide range, but overall are less favourable than average. Pupils' attainment when they start at the school is also wide ranging, but overall is well below average, particularly in the skills of communication, language and literacy. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average and includes pupils with speech and communication difficulties, dyslexia and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. One of these pupils has a statement of special educational needs. About half the pupils are of white British origin, with others coming from a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. The large majority of pupils have English as a home language and, although others have a range of different home languages, only three or four pupils are at early stages in learning English. A large number of pupils leave or start at the school at other than the usual junctures.

For several years the school has had difficulties in recruiting staff and few remain from the previous inspection two years ago. This has presented many difficulties in establishing a settled management system. The current position is now much more stable.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21277	Steve Hill	Lead inspector	Science, Information and communication technology, Art and design, Design and technology, Physical education
16472	Catherine Stormonth	Lay inspector	
21750	Sue Hall	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, Mathematics, Special educational needs, Personal, social and health education and Citizenship, English as an additional Language
32279	Robin Hammerton	Team inspector	English, Music, History, Geography

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Inspections  
102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
GL53 7JX

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This improving school is providing a **satisfactory** education for its pupils. Good leadership has improved teaching and raised achievement so that both are now satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in the younger classes and satisfactory for older pupils. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good leadership from the headteacher and governors has resulted in a clear educational direction in the school's work.
- Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Pupils behave well, form good relationships and have positive attitudes to school because of the school's good provision for social and moral education.
- Teaching and learning are good in the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2 so these pupils achieve well.
- The use of assessment to match work to pupils' needs is not precise enough.
- Pupils' weak writing skills hold back their progress in a number of subjects.
- Very good links with parents and the community support pupils' learning very effectively.
- Some subject co-ordinators give a clear lead to colleagues, but others have not fully developed their roles and many are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and supporting teaching in other classes.

Improvement since the last inspection is good and the serious weaknesses identified then have been eliminated. Standards and teaching have improved, particularly for younger pupils. The curriculum has improved and now meets statutory requirements in all subjects. Much better provision is made for ICT, which is now a strength of the school. Leadership and management have been improved. Assessment is better, but its use in planning work for pupils still has weaknesses.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is **satisfactory** overall. It is good in the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory in the older classes. Pupils start at the school with standards that are well below average and, although they improve, are still below average overall by the end of the school. Most pupils currently in Reception achieve well and are likely to meet the expected standards (the early learning goals) in personal, social and emotional development by Year 1, but most will not do so in the other areas of learning, where standards are below average.

Standards in Years 1 to 6 are generally below average, including overall standards in English, mathematics and science. In Years 1 and 2, standards now meet expectations in speaking and listening, are below average in reading and well below average in writing. Standards in ICT are above national expectations. In Years 3 to 6 standards are below average in reading, and in speaking and listening, and are well below average in writing. Standards in ICT are in line with expectations.

Pupils' low standards in writing slow their progress and hamper standards in a number of other subjects. Conversely, their improving standards in speaking and listening are a positive factor in pupils' improving achievement across the curriculum.

Low standards have been reflected in results of national assessments at age 11 for several years, as can be seen in the table below. The table also shows that, in comparison with how they did at the age of 7, pupils made satisfactory progress overall. Detailed results show that pupils who were at St Mary's throughout Years 3 to 6 did better than this in English, making good progress.

Results of national assessments at the age of seven had also been low for several years, but improved in 2004 and were good in comparison with similar schools.

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

*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' personal qualities develop well and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Their attitudes to school are good, as is their behaviour overall, although a few pupils find it difficult to conform and occasionally their weak behaviour can disrupt lessons. Attendance has improved because of the school's very good procedures, but is still below average.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **satisfactory** and is constantly improving. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and have many developing strengths, particularly in the younger classes. Pupils' learning is supported by their good collaborative skills and the good attention teachers pay to developing their speaking and listening skills. Teachers work hard and support each other well. They are keen to develop and improve their skills, and are fully involved in opportunities for professional development. As a result, their subject knowledge is good and they plan effectively to provide a wide-ranging and interesting curriculum, which enthuses pupils about their learning. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but teachers do not use the information precisely enough in matching work to pupils' individual needs. Pupils are well cared for and very good links with parents and the community provide strong support for their learning.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The strong leadership and commitment of the headteacher are the principal reasons for the significant improvements made in the school's provision over the last two years. Strong support has come from the good governance and from the clear leadership which some subject co-ordinators provide to their colleagues. Management is satisfactory, with good systems now introduced to support the school's development, although many of them still need to be fully implemented. The targets in the school improvement plan are not specific enough. Some subject co-ordinators have not yet fully developed their leadership roles and most have too little involvement in monitoring teaching in different classes.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and carers are positive about the school and appreciate the way it takes account of their views. Pupils enjoy school. They like their teachers and the interesting range of work they provide. They know they are valued and feel safe and secure, although some older pupils feel that the school does not take enough account of their opinions.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- make more precise use of assessment data to match work to the needs of individual pupils;
- improve standards in writing;
- extend the role of subject co-ordinators, particularly in the monitoring of teaching.



## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Achievement is **satisfactory** overall. It is good in Reception and in Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory in other classes. Standards are improving but are generally below average, mainly because they are well below average when children start in Reception.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Younger pupils are achieving well because of improvements in teaching.
- Pupils throughout the school achieve well in ICT.
- Weak writing standards are hampering progress in subjects across the curriculum.

#### Commentary

1. Achievement, particularly in the younger classes, has improved since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Achievement has improved in all classes in ICT, moving from being unsatisfactory throughout the school at the last inspection to being good throughout the school now.
2. Children start in the Foundation Stage with overall standards that are well below average. Their skills in communication, language and literacy are particularly weak. Currently they are achieving well overall. Achievement is very good for personal, social and emotional development and children are likely to meet the expected standards (the early learning goals) in this area of learning by the end of Reception. Achievement is satisfactory for physical development and good in other areas of learning but few children will meet the early learning goals in these other areas of learning. Standards here are likely to be below the expected levels because of pupils' low starting points.
3. Results of national assessments at age seven had been low for several years, but in 2004 improved. This was partly because this was a particularly able group and partly because of the improvements in teaching. Results were average compared with schools generally in mathematics, although still a little below average in reading and writing. Compared with similar schools, results were above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. Teacher assessments in science in 2004 showed that an average number of pupils attained the expected levels, but none exceeded them.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.0 (13.6)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	14.0 (12.2)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	16.1 (14.6)	16.2 (16.3)

*There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. Inspection evidence indicates that, although the current group is not as able as the 2004 cohort, the improvement in achievement has generally been maintained. Achievement remains good because of the very much better teaching in Years 1 and 2 than at the last inspection. Current standards are still below average in reading, writing and science and well below average in mathematics. Most pupils continue to attain the expected standards in science although, as last year, few are likely to exceed them. Speaking and listening skills have improved because of the school's concentration on them and are in line with national expectations in these younger classes. Standards in ICT are above expectations.
5. Pupils' scores in national assessments at age eleven have been well below average for several years, compared with schools nationally. Compared with similar schools (based on pupils' results at age seven) their scores in 2004 were average in English and science and below average in mathematics. Results were better in reading than in writing. Detailed examination of results shows that pupils who were at St Mary's since Year 2 achieved well in English.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.1 (24.9)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	24.1 (24.0)	27.0 (26.8)
science	26.6 (25.5)	28.6 (28.6)

*There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

6. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Years 3 to 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science. Reading continues to be better than writing, and writing standards are well below average. Standards are in line with expectations in ICT.
7. The good achievements across the school in ICT are because of the major concentration on the subject for two years. Good support from the local education authority, a firm lead from the head and the co-ordinator, a thorough programme of training and hard work from all staff have been major factors. Another has been greatly improved equipment, including interactive whiteboards in each classroom, and a new computer suite which is used regularly. As a result, pupils have a secure understanding of most elements of the subject and have good skills in using computers.
8. In many subjects, pupils' written work does not do justice to their knowledge. Even when they understand quite complex issues, they often are unable to explain their understanding fully in their writing. Accomplishing written tasks in different subjects often takes longer than it should, slowing down the pace of learning.
9. Boys and girls, and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, make similar progress in different subjects and their achievement is the same as that of their classmates. Pupils with special educational needs and bilingual pupils also achieve as well as their classmates. When they are supported individually or in small groups they often achieve well but the level of additional support is not high and there is no mother tongue support for any specific group of pupils.

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

Behaviour is **good** and pupils have **good** attitudes to their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is **unsatisfactory** but is improving. Punctuality is satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy school and are very interested in all aspects of school life.
- Pupils support each other well, respect their differences and make allowances for each other's difficulties.
- Although the vast majority of pupils behave well, a small but significant proportion of older boys sometimes do not.
- Provision for moral and social development is effective but the school misses opportunities to develop spiritual and cultural development even further.
- The procedures to promote attendance are very good and are helping to improve both attendance and punctuality.

### Commentary

10. The large majority of pupils say they enjoy school and especially the friendships they make there. Many take pleasure in their work and try to do well, although the presentation of work is often untidy. They join in the full range of activities on offer with enthusiasm and particularly value the opportunities for trips out. There are good relationships throughout the school between almost all pupils and with staff. Pupils trust and value their teachers and the support staff. Pupils are supportive of each other and are understanding and helpful when others are struggling with their work or behaviour. Most work and play happily together. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved since the last inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties also have good attitudes to school and respond positively to the activities planned to meet their needs.
11. Most pupils understand and support school rules. However, there are a small but significant minority of pupils who do not consistently behave well. These are mainly older boys who can become angry very quickly and become involved in disturbances with other pupils in lessons and at play. At times this can affect the concentration of those around them and take staff time from other pupils. The school has good procedures to deal with such matters and staff generally deal consistently with pupils. There have been four fixed period exclusions during the last school year.

#### *Ethnic background of pupils*

#### *Exclusions in the last school year*

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White - British	101	2	0
White - any other White background	24	1	0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	8	0	0
Mixed - White and Black African	5	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or British Asian - Bangladeshi	4	0	0
Asian or British Asian - any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean	7	0	0

Black or Black British - African	30	0	0
Black or Black British - any other Black background	6	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Parent / pupil preferred not to say	1	0	0

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

12. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. Spiritual development is satisfactory. The prayer area in the central courtyard continues to provide opportunities for prayer and reflection and is well supported by local clergy, who visit on a weekly basis. However, whilst prayers are said at lunchtimes, these are sometimes of a perfunctory nature and do little to develop spirituality. 'Circle time' discussions are organised for most classes, although are not a feature of current activities for Year 6, where it might be entirely appropriate. Provision for moral development is good. Staff are good role models and the school provides a clear moral code. There is no formal school council, but pupils confidently discuss their ideas with the headteacher.
13. Provision for social development is good. Pupils have good opportunities to work together and good use is made of *talk partners*, when they regularly discuss their ideas in lessons. There are formal and informal opportunities for older pupils to help younger ones. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory and is well supported by a wide range of visits to places of educational interest. However, the school misses opportunities to celebrate the wide diversity of cultures in the local community and planning does not make the most of the rich range of home backgrounds.
14. Attendance is slightly below the national average but is continuing an upward trend to improve. This is the successful result of a concerted effort by the school over the past three years. The current rate of unauthorised absence is low and is well below the national level. This reflects the very good procedures to follow up absences. The Home Liaison Officer has established some very good links with families to encourage better attendance. Punctuality on arrival at school is satisfactory. Timekeeping during the school day is good.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	0.3
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 is **satisfactory**. Teaching is satisfactory with particular strengths in younger classes. There is a good curriculum, which successfully engages pupils' interest. Very good use is made of a wide range of visits out, as well as visitors to the school, to enhance learning. Provision for ICT is good. There are good systems for maintaining pupils' well-being, health and safety. Pupils feel secure in school and like and trust their teachers, but some older pupils feel that not enough notice is taken of their opinions. Links with parents and with the community are very good.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall. They are good in Reception and in Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory in the older classes. Assessment is **satisfactory** except in Reception, where it is very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are good at stimulating pupils' enthusiasm through interesting activities.
- Very good use is made of interactive whiteboards as a teaching tool.
- Teachers' consistent use of strategies to promote speaking and listening skills supports pupils' learning effectively in a range of subjects and develops their collaborative skills well.
- Not enough use is made of assessment data in matching work to the needs of individual pupils, except in Reception where this is done very well.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 34 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (6)	1 (3)	13 (38)	17 (50)	1 (3)	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.*

15. Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection, particularly in the younger classes, and in ICT throughout the school. Teaching in Years 1 to 2 is better than in Years 3 to 6 because high expectations and challenge are more consistent features and the maintenance of high standards of behaviour is more secure. A good pace is a feature of many of the better lessons, with the result that a lot is accomplished in the time available and pupils are all involved throughout the session. Conversely, in satisfactory lessons that were in many ways good, the weakness was often too slow a pace at times so that pupils lost interest and learning suffered. This most often happened when introductions to lessons were too long and pupils' concentration lapsed because they were not sufficiently active or involved.
16. Similarly, teachers generally deal well with the minority of pupils who have significant behavioural difficulties. A combination of positive relationships, clear routines and expectations and interesting work to do ensures that they are involved in lessons and do not interrupt their classmates' progress. Occasionally, when teachers lose pupils' interest or are unable to get a pupil to conform, then the progress of all the class can suffer as the teacher has to spend too much time and effort maintaining order and holding pupils' concentration.
17. Teachers generally have a good understanding of the curriculum and of how to engage pupils' interest. They plan carefully to involve pupils through a range of interesting tasks, often involving practical or investigative work. This has included good use of experimental work in science, a weakness at the last inspection. Teachers are very successful in developing pupils' confidence so that they are willing to tackle tasks that are challenging. Teachers make extensive and effective use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. This enables them to give clear illustrations and demonstrations, which help pupils to understand complex ideas quickly, and their

facility in using this equipment ensures that the pace is quick and pupils' interest is maintained.

18. A significant strength of teaching is the concentration on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teachers systematically encourage pupils to discuss their ideas and test out their thinking in pairs. This is very successful in helping them to think through their ideas and ensures that they remain involved in the lesson. It is succeeding in improving their speaking skills as well as supporting learning in subjects across the curriculum. Pupils are gaining good collaborative skills because they are able to sort out ideas together and they use these well in co-operative tasks across the curriculum.
19. The school has successfully introduced satisfactory assessment procedures, particularly in the core subjects, and carefully tracks the progress of individuals as they move through the school. Teachers have a secure understanding of the differing abilities of their pupils and often try to make sure that work is modified to meet these needs. However, except in Reception, they seldom plan the work more precisely by using the assessment data they have available. As a result, pupils are sometimes given work that is too hard or too easy for them. Teachers are careful to monitor how pupils are getting on during lessons and, if pupils are confused, intervene to give extra help. However, if work is too easy, then sometimes brighter pupils coast along and do not make the progress of which they are capable.
20. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and of those with dual languages is satisfactory overall. There is also a satisfactory programme of intervention and support to groups of pupils who do not make enough progress. Pupils with recognised learning difficulties receive some additional individual or small group support outside the classroom, which is of a satisfactory nature. Their progress is tracked and monitored but some activities lack imagination and flair and do relatively little to motivate pupils who find learning difficult.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a **good** curriculum for its pupils overall. There is a **satisfactory** range of activities outside lessons. Accommodation and resources for learning are **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A well-structured overall plan ensures a broad and interesting curriculum for all pupils.
- Visits out of school, visitors to the school and good opportunities for investigational work significantly enrich the curriculum.
- The development of specific skills in subjects other than English, mathematics, ICT and science is not planned well enough and insufficient time is given to these subjects in Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Pupils enjoy a stimulating learning environment.

### **Commentary**

21. Under the headteacher's clear leadership, the staff have developed a detailed whole school curriculum plan. This fully meets statutory requirements and takes good account of local needs. It includes suitable provision for sex and relationships education and drugs awareness. The termly themes, which underpin much of the work, cover a wide range of interesting topics. Clear guidance is provided for teachers,

with some flexibility to meet the needs and interests of different pupils. National strategies for literacy and numeracy are used effectively.

22. In general, lessons provide a wide range of different themes and activities, which thoroughly engage pupils' enthusiasm. A good range of planned investigations and enquiries in all subjects encourages pupils to find things out for themselves. Sometimes, however, aspects of the work rely on pupils' writing skills, which are not sufficiently well developed to help them to learn best. Many excursions are arranged, to London museums and the local fire station, for example. These are used very effectively to support pupils' learning. Visitors to the school, including local people with memories of World War Two and specialist music teachers, also make a major contribution. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in a reasonable range of extra-curricular activities, involving sport and the arts. The curriculum has improved well since the last inspection.
23. In Years 1 and 2, a large portion of the teaching time is given to literacy. This means that there is not enough time to teach all the other subjects in sufficient depth, which leaves some gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. In Year 6, a rigid focus on preparing for the national tests reduces the time available for subjects other than English, mathematics and science. The individual schemes of work (for subjects other than English, mathematics, science and ICT) tend to focus too much on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding and not enough on developing their skills. The headteacher has identified that a more systematic approach to developing pupils' subject skills, such as using maps in geography and evaluating evidence in history, is needed.
24. Curriculum provision for children with special educational needs and from the range of ethnic heritages in the Foundation Stage is good and that for pupils in the rest of the school is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage, pupils' needs are recognised, recorded and tracked very effectively. In the rest of the school, although teachers liaise with staff providing additional support, activities do not always closely mirror what is happening in the classroom and so, for instance, do not enable pupils to learn specific vocabulary for classroom projects.
25. The school is satisfactorily staffed to provide its curriculum. The accommodation and resources are well planned and maintained to promote learning. Classrooms are well furnished and all have interactive whiteboards. Displays are bright and stimulating. The library, small teaching rooms and ICT and music room are well resourced. The compact playgrounds have been developed well to support learning and play. Reception pupils enjoy a good, safe outdoor area. The hall and adjacent internal courtyard also provide useful space, which ensures that the full range of the curriculum can be provided.

## Care, guidance and support

The school takes **good** care of pupils. The arrangements for health and safety are **good**. Support and guidance based on monitoring of performance are **satisfactory**. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils value the good working and trusting relationships they develop with all staff.
- The arrangements for pupils' welfare are strong.
- There are good procedures to help pupils to settle quickly and happily into school.
- Pupils' awareness of their own performance has weaknesses because they are unsure of their targets for improvement.

### Commentary

26. The school gives a high priority to helping others in a supportive, inclusive and caring community. Pupils feel safe and know that they would have someone to turn to if they were ever worried or troubled. When issues are detected, they are quickly resolved to ensure that pupils are happy and can achieve their best. The Home Liaison Officer helps and supports families well and gives good advice on aspects of social welfare and health-related issues.
27. The arrangements for child protection are good. Pupils are sensitively monitored and fully supported. Pupils with a range of medical needs are catered for very well. The individual care plans for pupils with conditions such as severe allergies are very good. When pupils are ill or injured, they receive a high level of care and attention. Risk assessments and buildings and grounds inspections are good and issues are addressed swiftly. However, there are some shortfalls in how the school implements the correct frequency of routine checking systems, such as fire drills, and how these should be recorded.
28. Good individual arrangements are made to ensure that pupils settle and adapt very quickly to the routines of their new school. Parents are closely involved until pupils feel able to cope effectively. Mid-term arrivals are looked after very well and monitored closely to ensure their academic, social and personal development needs are met effectively. At the end of the year, pupils are given some good opportunities to get a taste of their new class as they move up through the school. The transition from year to year is smooth and pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
29. Assessment data is not used sufficiently to help pupils improve their performance. Pupils know what national curriculum levels they are achieving but have little idea of how to get to the next level. Target setting is at an early stage and pupils are unsure what their learning goals are for further improvement. The tracking of personal development based on monitoring is satisfactory.

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

The links with parents are **very good**; the school is popular and held in high regard. Links with the local community are **very good** and links with other schools are **satisfactory**.



## Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very strong partnership with parents to support pupils' academic and personal development.
- The school actively seeks parents' views and reacts to ensure high satisfaction levels across all aspects of school life.
- Parents get good information from the school overall, but reports on pupils' progress are inconsistent and give insufficient advice about how they could improve.
- There are many rewarding links with the local and wider community that significantly enrich learning.

## Commentary

30. Parental support for pupils' learning and for the wide range of school activities is very good. Parents feel they have a true partnership based on good two-way communications and mutual trust. Home Liaison Officer links are particularly good when families are helped and supported to benefit pupils' learning and improve the quality of school life. Parents' classes are well attended and have valuable spin-offs for learning. Parents' views are regularly sought, valued and acted upon. When parents do raise concerns, the school acts quickly. For example, in a recent questionnaire an issue was raised about homework inconsistency; the school included the issues raised in the new school improvement plan and parents were pleased with this response.
31. The school is very approachable and parents find it very reassuring to be able to pop in and talk to staff whenever needs arise. The Friday afternoon parent-time appointment system was praised by parents, who said it was an excellent opportunity to see staff and support their children's learning. Formal consultation and work exhibition arrangements are also very good. School reports, however, vary considerably and, although they offer satisfactory information overall, some do not report progress sufficiently. There is inconsistency in the way that weaknesses are identified and some reports do not give targets for improvement. The quality of other information in newsletters, letters, the school prospectus and governor's annual report is good and school documents are full of useful information and are well written. The School Association is active and offers a busy social calendar and useful fundraising. The special educational needs co-ordinator, as the longest serving member of staff, links well with parents and the community and works to get and keep parents informed and involved in their children's education, although several parents choose not to take advantage of the support available.
32. Links with the local community are very good. The links with the three local churches are very strong and the clergy are regular and welcome visitors, helping to deliver high quality assemblies and enriching spiritual and moral development. The local road safety team, school nurse, fire service, musicians and a host of other visitors help to enhance personal and cultural development. Very close links with the local library successfully promote reading for pleasure, especially by boys. The school uses London itself very well as a rich source of learning, by frequent visits to places like museums, galleries and theatres. Pupils were amazed at St Paul's Cathedral and the Houses of Parliament and described these as 'fabulous places'.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher provides **good** leadership, as do other key staff. Management is **satisfactory**. Governance is **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher's very clear view of how the school can improve motivates and inspires staff.
- Some management systems are not yet fully implemented and embedded.
- The quality of teaching is monitored carefully by senior staff, leading to improvements.
- The governing body supports and challenges the school well.
- The school improvement plan is helpful in improving provision but is not focused enough on raising standards or used effectively to monitor outcomes.
- Staff induction and development is effective, leading to greater stability in staffing.
- The role of the curriculum leader is underdeveloped in many subjects.

## Commentary

33. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has worked tirelessly to develop her leadership and improve the school. In doing this, support from the local education authority has been used well. She knows the pupils and parents well and has a clear view of the needs of the community. She has ensured that developments are more focused on standards and has articulated a clear view about how the curriculum and teaching should develop. This has been effectively shared with staff who, as a result, are clear about what they need to do to move the school forward. The headteacher and assistant headteacher have ensured that relevant staff training has been provided. They both observe lessons regularly and scrutinise pupils' work, offering helpful feedback to staff. All this has helped to improve the quality of teaching and standards, especially by the end of Year 2.
34. Teaching and support staff are highly motivated. They are very willing to reflect on their practice, support each other, try new ideas and bring about improvements. Induction arrangements are good. New staff are listened to, coached and guided carefully, with well-focused support provided. This has helped bring about a more stable staffing position recently and has the potential to help the school improve further.
35. A number of management systems are being developed in the school, including a tracking system for pupil assessment data, arrangements for school self-evaluation, staff performance management and the school improvement plan. These systems are all operating satisfactorily but need to be further developed to underpin the good leadership in the school. The headteacher is clear about what she wants the senior management team to do when new deputy and assistant headteachers, who have been appointed, join the staff later this year. There is currently less clarity about how this will be managed in terms of specific roles and responsibilities. The school improvement plan is detailed and identifies many appropriate actions. However, there is insufficient information about what specific improvements in standards these actions are designed to achieve. The plan is not effective enough, therefore, in helping to identify and measure success. The separate action plan, written after the last inspection, does this better, but the school's evidence about this is not fully collated.
36. Curriculum leadership in English, science, information and communication technology and history is good, and is satisfactory and improving in mathematics. Effective monitoring of teaching and planning takes place in these subjects. In other subjects, the mainly new subject leaders have not yet been able to identify their priorities clearly enough or monitor and evaluate standards in depth. Both the headteacher and the local education authority have identified this and have produced plans to address the issues. Leadership and management of the provision for special educational needs and for pupils with English as an additional language are satisfactory. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and manage such support as is available in an appropriate manner.
37. The governing body is committed and its members work hard to support the school. They have supported the headteacher well in developing her personal leadership and, most particularly, in making wise decisions about staffing by avoiding rushing into appointments. The governing body achieves the right balance between support and care for the headteacher and staff and asking searching questions. The committee structure is effective and all statutory duties are fulfilled. The governing body is involved in producing the school improvement plan but the weaknesses in this plan

mean that governors do not make a sufficient link between spending and standards of achievement.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	761,666	Balance from previous year	59,082
Total expenditure	731,356	Balance carried forward to the next year	89,392
Expenditure per pupil	3,789		

38. Budgets are set carefully and day-to-day financial management is effective. The school has a high level of funds in reserve. This has been caused, in part, by the delay in appointing a deputy head until a suitable candidate was found. This excess balance is now being used prudently to support the appointment of senior staff and to mitigate the effects of a reducing budget. Taking the standards achieved by pupils into account, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

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

The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

39. There has been good improvement in the quality of education in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is good and, following staffing changes and improvements in planning, this is starting to make a significant impact on achievement. The children's attainment when they join the school is well below average in all areas of their learning, with key skills being generally at a low level. Their larger-scale physical skills are stronger than their fine motor control. Assessment routines are thorough and very good overall. The information gained is used very effectively to inform planning in order to offer a consistently good level of challenge for different groups of children. Because of good expectations of what they can achieve, all children, including those of higher attainment, those with special educational needs and those from the range of ethnic heritages, make consistently good progress and achieve well. This is especially so in their personal and social development, where they achieve very well and are on line to meet the targets for their age. In other areas, children make good progress overall but, from a low base, do not generally reach the levels expected when they leave the Foundation Stage. However, a growing number are starting to meet some of the targets for their age.
40. Leadership and management are good and the team leader has a very clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations. The curriculum is very good, with a wide range of exciting activities generating great enthusiasm and enjoyment from the children. Children benefit from good accommodation and resources, with the class base being bright, lively and stimulating. However, there are shortcomings in the quality of the work of support staff who, at times, provide barely adequate help to the children and teaching staff.

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

The provision for personal, social and emotional development is **very good**.

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

- The very caring ethos, supportive environment and positive relationships strongly support children's progress.
- There is a bright and vibrant learning environment, which promotes an interest in learning and the development of positive attitudes and self-confidence.

#### **Commentary**

41. Teaching and learning are very good and result in children's positive attitudes to learning. At times, teaching is excellent, as was seen in a lesson when children identified things that were special to them, showed these to their classmates and talked to the class about them. Children achieve very well because they are valued and supported very effectively so that their self-confidence and belief in their abilities grow rapidly. The curriculum is good and is very good for personal, social and emotional development. Because they are warmly welcomed and encouraged, children overcome any initial shyness, settle happily to school routines and try hard to

please the adults around them. The classroom area is bright and very well presented, which shows children that learning is interesting and important. The extensive display of children's work helps raise self-esteem so they become enthusiastic learners. Children are encouraged to share and take turns, which become features of their relationships. Staff make clear their expectations of good behaviour. Occasionally, children do not have enough chance to plan their own activities or choose resources and so promote independence even further. By the time they enter Year 1, virtually all children meet the targets for their age in this area.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

The provision for communication, language and literacy is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Role-play is used effectively to promote language skills.
- There is a well-planned range of activities to extend learning in all aspects of communication.

### **Commentary**

42. Achievement is good. Initially this is an area where the majority of children have very low-level skills. Several children are quiet and shy and speak in only short phrases, and few have a mature vocabulary for their age. There is a well-planned range of discussions and activities that promote speaking and listening well. The teacher makes good use of 'talk partners' to encourage the children to discuss their ideas on any given theme. Children are taught in a vibrant, stimulating and literate environment which creates interest in developing communication skills. Role-play activities are well planned and themes are changed regularly to create interest. The current development of a Flower Shop maintains some children's interest in money, combined with seasonal work on growing things. Good teaching enables children to learn well and grow in confidence although, overall, the majority of children do not achieve all the targets expected for their age.
43. Children are encouraged to learn to read and write in an effective manner. From their start in the Reception class, they are encouraged to try to write what they think words look and sound like. They write about their favourite book and when they have completed their writing read this back to staff who scribe below their work, helping to identify the way words are made. Children are encouraged to write lists, captions, their names and simple sentences and most develop positive attitudes to reading and writing.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Mathematical concepts are reinforced well through a good range of whole class, group and individual activities.
- Good use is made of the interactive whiteboard to promote understanding of numbers.
- Support staff do too much for children in some activities, which limits their learning.

### **Commentary**

44. Teaching and learning in this area are good because the class teacher organises a well-planned range of activities. These include whole class sessions where children enjoy finding out about numbers to ten and beyond. Children like looking at and using an interactive whiteboard to move numbers around to match them to other numbers and put these in the right order. There is also a good range of related activities, for example when children decide how many leaves they want to put on their individual beanstalks, count these out and stick them on. There are many planned and informal opportunities to use numbers in activities including measuring out ingredients for making bread, although support staff do too much for children in such activities. There is also continuing access to sand and water and emphasis on developing the language of position when thinking about climbing in / out, over / under equipment in physical education. From a modest understanding of numbers and shapes, children make good progress and achieve well, although most do not attain the targets for their age and standards are below average.

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

The provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good use of the outdoor area enhances children's learning.
- Themes such as making things grow provide first-hand experiences that the children find interesting.

### **Commentary**

45. Because teaching and learning are good in this area, children achieve well but, at the end of Reception, their skills and understanding are still below what is expected for their age. Many of the children enter school with very restricted knowledge of the world around them. Because staff plan a good range of practical learning activities, children develop a much more lively interest in what happens. They enjoy finding out about things that grow by smelling and touching plants and thinking about what will happen to the herbs that they plant. They enjoy using construction equipment and have on-going access to design materials, which they often choose to use to make a variety of things. Teachers make good use of the attractive outdoors area so that children become familiar with the weather and the environment around them. In other activities, they find out about Zaccheus and the story of Christmas. There is good provision to use ICT and children do well in this aspect. Displays of recent work show that all children have opportunities to use computers to produce their own simple designs, showing growing dexterity in controlling colours in the patterns they create.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for physical development is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The outdoor play area is used well to promote physical skills.
- The use of some of the large-scale gymnastic equipment is not well suited to children's needs.

### **Commentary**

46. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in this area, as is children's achievement. Children start with weak skills in their fine motor control, although their other physical skills are somewhat better. By the end of Reception, whilst the large majority of children have average skills in working with large equipment, their fine skills are still below average. Overall standards are below what is expected for the age of the children. Children use a range of push, pull and pedal equipment and some of their skills in using these are good. They can control scooters and tricycles with growing confidence and manoeuvre these around the outdoor area, which is used regularly and well. Children also have regular opportunities to use the school hall and a range of equipment. However, there are some concerns when children use the large sized gymnastics equipment, which is not well suited to their size or levels of competence and confidence. Similarly there are questions over the supervision of pupils who are asked to perform forward rolls without being shown the techniques to do this safely.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

The provision for creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Creativity and imagination are encouraged and celebrated in well-planned and displayed art activities.
- The children have good access to role-play activities.

### **Commentary**

47. Teaching and learning are good in this area. Children make good progress and achieve well although, from a low base, many do not attain the standards expected for their age when they leave Reception. There is a strong emphasis on art and design activities, which are closely linked to current projects. For instance, the focus upon things that grow leads to very attractive and good quality drawings of flowers using oil pastels and tissue paper. Work is widely and attractively displayed around the Reception area, showing children that their efforts are valued and encouraging their positive attitudes to work. Children have good opportunities to use a wide range of materials, for example using clay to make plaques, which they decorate with seeds and pasta. They have opportunities to sing familiar rhymes, join in singing in whole school assemblies and have ready access to percussion instruments within the classroom.

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

### **ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' skills in speaking and listening have improved significantly because this has been managed well.
- Standards in writing are well below national expectations because of shortfalls in how it is taught.
- Assessment information is not always used well enough to provide challenging work for all pupils.
- Teaching in Years 1 and 2 has improved because of the good match of work to pupils' needs.



- Reading is taught methodically throughout the school and pupils enjoy books.
- The impact of improvement work in the subject is not always evaluated clearly enough.

## Commentary

48. Standards in English are below national expectations in Years 1 to 6. Achievement is satisfactory in the light of pupils' attainment when they started school. In Years 1 and 2 achievement has improved in reading, where it was unsatisfactory at the last inspection, and has improved considerably in speaking and listening, where achievement is now good and standards meet the national expectation. In writing, despite satisfactory achievement, standards remain well below average throughout the school, except in Year 1 where they are below average. A detailed analysis of the results of national tests, for pupils in Year 6 in 2004, shows that those who were at St Mary's throughout the juniors made good progress.
49. In all classes, pupils are given a wide range of interesting writing tasks, which they enjoy. Worksheets are used appropriately. This is an improvement in provision since the previous inspection. Spelling is satisfactory. However, throughout the school there are systemic weaknesses in the way writing is taught which are preventing standards from rising. Assessments of writing are not used effectively enough to provide sufficiently challenging and focused work suited to the actual needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Too many tasks are the same, or too similar, for all pupils regardless of their ability. Although pupils have writing targets, these are not always well matched to their actual needs; nor are they used enough in lessons. They are reviewed too infrequently. Therefore, pupils do not know well enough what next steps they need to take to improve their writing. As a result, pupils may persist in using bland vocabulary or leaving out capital letters and full stops, for example. Marking of writing is usually thorough. However, even where teachers provide guidance in marking to help pupils make improvements, this is not generally followed up sufficiently by pupils in Years 3 to 6.
50. Limitations in the content and style of pupils' writing are aggravated because handwriting and presentation lack consistency throughout the school. Letters are often incorrectly formed and there is an inconsistent approach to joining up, even amongst older pupils. Some work is very untidy and left unfinished. Too much responsibility for this has been left to individual teachers, without the expectation that all classes will follow a whole school approach to developing handwriting and presentation.
51. The school has recently undertaken a major initiative to develop speaking and listening. This was a sensible priority and has brought about some significant improvements. The subject leader and local education authority have provided good quality training for all staff. Teachers have been positive about adopting many ideas, including the use of specific objectives for speaking and listening in each class. Teachers and support staff have clear expectations about how pupils should listen. They are quick to correct any spoken grammatical errors made by pupils and model good speech well. Good use is made of partner discussions in many lessons, and even in assemblies. These strategies help pupils to listen to each other carefully and talk about their learning productively and confidently. Good improvement has been made throughout the school and this has been particularly rapid in Years 1 and 2.
52. Standards in reading are below national expectations in Years 1 to 6, with pupils achieving satisfactorily. Pupils have good attitudes to their reading. They enjoy the wide range of books the school provides for them. These are well structured in

difficulty levels. A recent focus in older classes on improving inference skills has been effective in raising standards. Regular visits to the local public library and book fairs, in which pupils may dress up as favourite characters, give reading a high profile. These opportunities promote imagination and enjoyment. When reading, pupils are often able to use phonics (the rules governing the links between letter combinations and the sounds of English) to 'sound out' words independently. They discuss texts sensibly. Reading is taught satisfactorily in class lessons. However, particularly in Years 3 to 6, the work is not always well enough targeted to the needs of particular pupils, which means that sometimes tasks are too easy for some pupils or too difficult for others.

53. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and are good in Years 1 and 2. Throughout the school, the purposes of lessons are made clear so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Lessons move at an appropriate pace. A good range of resources, including books and the interactive whiteboards, is used well to make lessons stimulating and motivating. Teachers build effectively on previous lessons, showing pupils clearly how what they already know can help them with new learning. Teachers effectively encourage pupils to listen carefully. Staff provide well focused support to pupils when working individually or in groups. As a result, pupils work hard and learn well. However, work is not always set at the right level of challenge for all pupils, although in Years 1 and 2 teaching and support staff are beginning to provide work which is better matched to pupils' specific needs. In these classes, teachers are quick to use pupils' particular interests and experience to support their learning.
54. Overall, provision is better than at the last inspection. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The knowledgeable subject leader provides a clear sense of direction and, in a short time, has supported staff well in improving provision in the prioritised areas of speaking and listening and reading. She observes lessons and scrutinises pupils' work astutely, providing helpful feedback to staff. This enables them to improve their teaching. She also manages intervention strategies to support some pupils who are working at a lower level than others. It is not yet possible, however, for her to evaluate fully the impact of all her hard work because there are no specific pupil targets or outcomes identified as success criteria.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. This is satisfactory overall. There are many opportunities for pupils to use their English skills across the curriculum and teachers plan for this well. Pupils' ability to listen well, and share their ideas through speaking to one another and adults, often enhances their learning in other subjects. Conversely, their more limited skills in writing hinder learning and often stop pupils from showing what they know and understand in its best light. There are, however, some examples of writing being used well in other subjects, including the good use of note taking when researching using the Internet.

## MATHEMATICS

The provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average because too few pupils attain standards above those expected for their age.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 from a low start because teaching is good.
- The school's work with the local education authority is starting to bring about improvements in provision.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning does not sufficiently involve the subject co-ordinator.
- Work in Year 6 is mainly geared to preparing pupils for national tests and does little to interest many of them.

### Commentary

56. Achievement is satisfactory overall. This shows good improvement since the previous inspection, when achievement was unsatisfactory. Many pupils were not making the progress that they could and standards in Year 2 were well below average. At that time standards in Year 6 were slightly better, although below average, with pupils achieving satisfactorily. National tests in 2004 show some considerable change in both key stages from the previous year. The 2004 tests at the age of seven show that pupils' attainment was in line with the national average and well above average in comparison with schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. However, the 2004 national tests at age eleven show that pupils' attainment was well below the national average and below average in comparison with similar schools. This indicates that this group of pupils made too little progress between the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
57. The inspection findings indicate there are considerable variations in standards year by year, largely due to different proportions of pupils with special needs in some year groups. A common feature of most year groups is that there are few pupils working at levels above the average. Current standards in Year 2 are below average. This indicates a fall from the most recent test results, almost entirely because there is a larger proportion of pupils of lower ability than in last year's group. Whilst standards are below average, these pupils are generally achieving well from a low base. Standards in Year 6 are also below average. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is broadly satisfactory, although with some weaknesses. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs and those from different ethnic heritages achieve as well as their classmates. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

58. In Year 2, pupils have a reasonable understanding of numbers and can identify those that are odd and even. However, several struggle to understand the relationship between subtraction and division. Nevertheless, because of good teaching over the last two years, these pupils are making good overall progress. In Year 6, pupils have some understanding of how to solve problems using measures including millimetres and millilitres but sometimes become confused about these. There are shortfalls in the older pupils' understanding, because of their weaker progress in the past, that are difficult to make up. Staff have made the decision to help these pupils prepare as widely as possible for national tests to give them the opportunity to do as well as they can. However, the continual use of practice test materials is having an adverse effect on pupils' levels of interest in mathematics, which many say is boring.
59. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and that in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory. An effective feature throughout the school is the confident way in which all staff use interactive whiteboards in lessons to explain the tasks they are to undertake. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is well planned and well paced so that activities move along well and are carefully linked to the level of children's ability and understanding. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is not as effective and, in some lessons in Year 6, is barely satisfactory. Here, the use of the same questions to test pupils prior to national tests causes evident discomfort to some pupils. Explanations of the questions and how to find the answers are sometimes confusing and do little to move the learning of some less confident pupils forward.
60. The school has benefited from the support of the local education authority, with staff working with the school to bring about improvements in planning. Assessment routines in mathematics are satisfactory throughout the school. In Years 1 and 2, information is often used well to provide an appropriate level of challenge for different groups of pupils. However, the use of assessment data is unsatisfactory in Years 3 to 6 because such information that is available is not used well enough to set interesting and challenging work, well matched to the different abilities of groups of pupils. The sample of recent work indicates that, on too many occasions, the same or very similar work is set for all pupils.
61. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and are starting to develop well. The recently appointed co-ordinator has worked hard to develop a clear grasp of standards and is working closely with staff from the Local Education Authority to ensure that the information available from assessments is analysed in order to identify where weaknesses occur. There is now a well-considered programme to monitor the quality of planning and pupils' work in order to identify strengths and weaknesses. Whilst some monitoring of teaching and learning is being undertaken, this has not yet involved the co-ordinator, which makes it difficult for her to identify some of the areas for improvement.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

62. This is unsatisfactory. The school has not developed the use of mathematics across the curriculum well enough. Staff do not exploit opportunities, in subjects such as science, to link to problem solving activities and thus make tasks more meaningful and real. The sample of pupils' work shows few examples of the use of ICT to support mathematical learning and classroom computers were rarely seen in use other than in introductions using interactive whiteboards.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have good opportunities to do practical and investigative work.
- Work is not sufficiently matched to the specific needs of individual pupils.
- Teachers make good use of ICT to help pupils' learning.

### **Commentary**

63. Improvement since the last inspection is good because of the much better provision for pupils to undertake practical and investigative work. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and is good in Years 1 and 2. Standards are continuing to improve, although they are still below average in most year groups. Most pupils are reaching the expected standards in the subject, but few exceed them, particularly in their written work. Pupils' understanding of investigative work is secure because of the good opportunities to undertake practical work. This is further enhanced by careful questioning from teachers so that pupils gain a sound understanding of a fair test and, by the end of the school, are able to analyse their observations and make sound generalisations. Most pupils in conversation show a satisfactory knowledge of the different aspects of science. However, in their written work they often do not have the skills to explain what they know and this undermines the results they are likely to attain in national tests, particularly at age eleven. This was reflected last year in the results of national tests, which were well below average.
64. Teaching is satisfactory overall and is good in Years 1 and 2. Teachers give good explanations and enthuse pupils by building work around practical investigations. They give clear explanations and often use the interactive whiteboard to clarify and illustrate their demonstrations. Good use is made of modeling programs to undertake virtual experiments that parallel actual investigations that pupils have undertaken. This consolidates pupils' understanding of science, as well as increasing their knowledge of ICT. The practical bias in the work is effective in gaining pupils' interest and enthusiasm, as well as putting their understanding on a firm footing. In too many lessons, teachers do not make enough use of the assessment information available to plan work for individuals and groups. This sometimes results in pupils undertaking work that is too easy, so that they do not make enough progress, or occasionally in them getting work that is too difficult and leaves them confused. In the latter case, teachers generally pick this up during the lesson and provide extra help so that pupils can cope. The lack of match of work to pupils' individual needs was also apparent in pupils' books and was a particular issue for the older classes.
65. The subject is currently managed on a temporary basis by two staff. They are giving good leadership to colleagues and have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in provision. They have effectively brought about improvement in the subject through ensuring that more attention is paid to investigative work, a weakness at the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is good because teachers make effective use of the computer suite and their good subject knowledge.
- Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to help pupils learn in a range of subjects, but other opportunities to use computers in class are sometimes missed.
- The subject co-ordinator gives colleagues a clear lead in the subject, but has had few opportunities to monitor their teaching.

## Commentary

66. There has been very good improvement in provision for this subject since the last inspection and a significant weakness has been turned into a significant strength. This is because of concerted action on the part of the whole school. Led by the headteacher and governors, and strongly supported by the Local Education Authority, considerable effort has gone into improving teaching and equipment, and hence standards and achievement.
67. From being below expectations throughout the school two years ago, standards are now in line with expectations in Years 3 to 6, and above expectations in Years 1 and 2. Pupils throughout the school are confident in using computers in the suite and show good facility for their ages in moving around a variety of programs and saving, retrieving or printing their work. Planning now ensures that pupils will cover the full range of the subject during their time in school. All are making good progress and the only reason older pupils are not also working above expectations is the shortfall they had to make up from their weak standards two years ago.
68. Teaching, learning and achievement are good from Years 1 to 6. Major improvements to teachers' subject knowledge have been made through a careful and extensive programme of training. Teachers have worked hard to develop their understanding and now are confident in using ICT. They have good subject knowledge and so structure their lessons well to support pupils' learning. In the suite, teachers ensure a good balance between clear explanations and demonstrations and good opportunities for pupils to have hands-on experience on the computers. Pupils are enthused by their work and are keen to learn. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to work in pairs and they share both ideas and the equipment amicably and sensibly, developing their social skills along with their speaking, listening and ICT skills.
69. The equipment, which was inadequate at the time of the last inspection, is now good. There is an interactive whiteboard in each classroom, as well as one in the computer suite, where a bank of laptops gives pupils regular and frequent access to computers, usually sharing one between two.
70. The subject has been well led and managed within the school community, with the head, co-ordinators, governors and the local education authority all playing their part, and both teachers and other staff working hard to improve provision. The current subject leader, who is new to the role this year, continues to give good leadership to colleagues and has a clear vision for developing the subject further. She has a satisfactory understanding of strengths and weaknesses in provision because of her analysis of work samples and assessment data, as well as discussions with colleagues. However, she has had little opportunity to refine her knowledge, and hence her ability to target support effectively, by watching her colleagues teach. This is on the school's agenda for next year.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. This is satisfactory with some major strengths. Teachers' consistent and effective use of interactive whiteboards in lessons in different subjects is providing good support to learning across the curriculum. Teachers' use goes much further than using them as superior blackboards. For example, one teacher videoed a technique in sewing so that pupils were able to see it enlarged on the screen. Another used the whiteboard to show a virtual experiment in science so that pupils could see the relationship between data collected and graphs very clearly. In lessons in the suite, good cross-curricular links are made with a variety of subjects. Some of the younger pupils have used graphics programs to develop their work in art and older pupils have brought their learning about spreadsheets to bear on supporting their work in mathematics and design and technology, for example. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to use other computers in lessons back in their own classrooms. The routine use of word processing for pupils when they do their writing is not established, for example, and pupils in Year 6 told inspectors that they had not done any word processing in school since last July. This lack deprives pupils of the chance to practise and maintain the skills they have learned in lessons in the suite.

## HUMANITIES

72. **Religious education** is inspected separately, by the Diocese, and is reported upon separately. Insufficient evidence was gained to make a judgement about overall provision in **geography**. One lesson was observed in Year 2, where the standards attained were below national expectations. Pupils were aware of some localities beyond their own, including Scottish islands, and knew some of the key features of these places. Their geographical vocabulary, however, was limited. Discussions with Year 6 pupils indicate that standards in this year group are also below national expectations. Pupils have carried out some interesting work about improving local environments, for example, and can talk about this clearly. Their geographical skills such as using maps are weak, however, and they have limited opportunities to undertake enquiry work.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is interesting and pupils enjoy the lessons.
- Not enough attention is paid to developing pupils' skills of interrogating and interpreting evidence.

### Commentary

73. There has been satisfactory improvement in provision since the last inspection and achievement is now satisfactory. History is a popular subject with pupils because they take part in a wide range of exciting activities, including memorable visits to museums and galleries, carrying out research on the Internet and interviewing visitors. They have access to a good range of resources, which helps them to find things out for themselves. They have secure factual knowledge of the periods they have studied. However, some of their skills, such as evaluating the usefulness of different sources of evidence or explaining and sequencing events, are weak.
74. In Years 1 and 2, standards are below national expectations and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils use evidence to find out about how the Victorians celebrated Christmas and use historical pictures to make simple deductions about the past. Higher ability pupils perceive why people in the past may have acted as they did and are beginning to explain some of the consequences of events. However, pupils' understanding of chronology, and how events may lead to one another, is limited.
75. In Years 3 to 6, standards remain below national expectations with satisfactory achievement. Pupils show sound factual knowledge of periods studied, such as the Tudors. They are able to link this work with current affairs, such as the election of a new Pope. They can discuss simply how they have used evidence but have an insecure understanding of how the past may be understood in different ways.
76. Teaching and learning have improved recently and are satisfactory overall, with good features. Teachers use effective questioning, supported by careful use of the interactive whiteboards, to help children to think clearly. This helps pupils to gain a secure understanding of what they study and engages their interest and enthusiasm. In a very good lesson in Year 1, pupils were enthused by a secret 'thing' which turned out to be a replica water well. In a Year 4 lesson, about changes in Formula One cars over time, pupils' interests were used well and they were challenged in their thinking. Insufficient time is allocated to the subject in Years 1 and 2, however, which leads to a lack of depth in pupils' understanding in these year groups.
77. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, as subject leader, has recently led significant good developments in the curriculum plan. This is well structured and includes enquiry questions and assessment opportunities. However, it is not clear enough about how historical skills should be developed from one year to the next. The headteacher has regularly observed lessons and looked at pupils' work. She has a good understanding of how well pupils are learning and what still needs to be improved.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS



78. None of these subjects was inspected in detail and it was not possible to reach secure overall judgements about provision. Two lessons were seen in each of physical education and design and technology and one each in music and art and design. In art and design, and in design and technology, samples of work were examined. Discussions were held with pupils about music. In general, the standards in the work seen were broadly in line with national expectations for pupils' ages.
79. In the lessons observed in **physical education**, pupils in Year 3 attained satisfactory standards in gymnastics and Year 6 pupils demonstrated a good understanding of dance during a theory lesson in the classroom. The Year 3 pupils showed average standards in balancing and in putting together a sequence of movements. They worked hard and enjoyed their lesson, and they behaved well, even when the pace slowed because they spent too long waiting their turn. The Year 6 pupils showed a good understanding of different techniques and of the different elements of dance. The good teaching in this lesson was characterised by high expectations, effective use of video clips to demonstrate dance traditions from different parts of the world and good attention to technical vocabulary. Pupils responded with rapt attention and commented sensitively on what they saw. There were very good links with English as pupils developed their ideas effectively with their talking partners and showed good skills in note-taking while watching the video.
80. Work on display in **art and design** was generally of a satisfactory standard and covered a good range of media. Some of the best work on display was in Year 2, where pupils had pursued a theme of *patterns in nature* by making designs with real flowers and other natural objects before photographing them. They then produced other work based on these patterns, in paint and in collage, as well as developing the theme using a graphics program on the computer. This work was of a better standard than is usual for this age. In the one lesson seen, with Year 1, pupils made good progress as they designed and made small sculptures from multi-coloured pipe-cleaners. Teaching was good because a good balance was drawn between the clear teaching of specific techniques and good opportunities for pupils to explore and experiment with an unfamiliar medium. Their skills covered a wide range and were broadly average for their age, and some of the best finished work was quite complex and imaginative.
81. The work available on display in **design and technology** was much less extensive. The wheeled vehicles made by pupils in Year 2 and the clay animals made by Year 5 were generally average in quality. Work in the two lessons seen also was broadly in line with the expectations for pupils' ages. Pupils in Year 3 showed sound skills in making nets of shapes from card and worked enthusiastically. They had good opportunities to explore materials, but the lack of teaching of specific techniques meant that progress was only satisfactory. In a lesson on sewing skills with Year 4, progress was good because good, hands-on opportunities were supported by the clear teaching of specific sewing techniques. Good use of extra adults meant that pupils had support when they needed it and were able to tackle a difficult new skill with success. The lesson was well structured as part of a series, leading to pupils designing and making purses or wallets. These pupils' skills and understanding of the design process were in line with national expectations.
82. In the one lesson observed in **music**, in Year 5, teaching and learning were good and standards met the national expectation. Pupils recognised and explored combinations of sound, and sang with confidence and some expression. They played instruments

with accuracy and most maintained a simple part accurately. Some pupils suggested useful ways to improve their work. Discussions with Year 2 pupils show that they enjoy the subject and, for example, understand what a steady beat is and can clap one. They comment sensibly on music they have heard and talk about a range of instruments they have played. They cannot remember having made up much music of their own. Year 6 pupils enjoy their weekly lessons. They have composed their own music and can describe aspects of different musical styles, such as the blues. They have been out to concerts and some of them enjoyed playing in a school Samba band at a local bookshop in the past. The music curriculum is interesting for the pupils. Suitable support is provided for teachers, in part through a published scheme. Some pupils have instrumental lessons with visiting teachers.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

83. It was possible to observe only a very small number of activities related to personal, social and health education and citizenship, therefore it is not possible to report in full on this area or give an overall judgement on provision. From the work seen and through discussions it is evident that many elements of provision are good. Provision across the school is planned effectively through discussions and within other subjects and supports pupils' personal development well. Citizenship is an aspect of the school's work that threads throughout the curriculum and underpins the good ethos of the school. Pupils and staff indicate this is an area that the school sees as important and there are opportunities for 'Circle time' discussions in classes other than Year 6. This omission is a distinct weakness and deprives these pupils of the chance to have their views heard and valued. As a result, pupils in this class feel that their opinions are often not taken notice of. There is very good provision and teaching in Reception and one lesson seen was excellent. Across the school very good use is made of visits and visitors to extend pupils' understanding of citizenship and the part they can play in the local community.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
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).*