

INSPECTION REPORT

St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School

Failsworth, Oldham

LEA area: Oldham

Unique reference number: 105727

Headteacher: Mrs M E Moores

Lead inspector: Mrs D T Bell

Dates of inspection: 4 – 6 July 2005

Inspection number: 267889

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:	472
School address:	Clive Road Failsworth Manchester
Postcode:	M35 0NN
Telephone number:	0161 681 6663
Fax number:	0161 684 1134
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Christine Williamson
Date of previous inspection:	28 June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a large voluntary aided Roman Catholic primary school that caters for 217 boys and 255 girls, 9 of whom attend the nursery part time. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, though mostly from the area close to the school, which suffers from considerable social deprivation. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly as expected for their age, although literacy and social skills are somewhat under-developed. The great majority of pupils are of white British origin with only a small number from minority ethnic or mixed ethnic origins and only a very small number for whom English is an additional language. No pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals is below the national average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including statements. The school is proud of its designation as a 'barrier-free' school and admits pupils with particular special educational needs from other parts of the local authority. It has a fairly settled pupil population but is bigger than it was at the time of the last inspection. It has undergone a number of staff changes, including the headteacher and senior management team, since that time. It achieved the Investors in People award in 2004, is working towards the Healthy Schools Award, and is part of the national initiative 'Sure Start' aimed at helping parents and their children to learn together.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
16413	Mrs D T Bell	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology Music
9649	Mrs J Smith	Lay inspector	
34331	Mrs D Stokes	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Geography History
30781	Mrs W Richardson	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology
35058	Mr J Hewitt	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science Physical education English as an additional language
11472	Mr M Beale	Team inspector	English Citizenship

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school. Very good leadership and management have successfully raised standards and improved pupils' achievement in the past three years. All pupils achieve very well by Year 6 because they are taught very well, their behaviour is very good and they show very good care and consideration for others. **The school provides very good value for money.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and governors.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good. Therefore pupils achieve very well and standards are well above the national expectation in English, mathematics and science in Year 6.
- Assessment information is used very effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- The provision for special educational needs is very good, enabling a large proportion of the pupils to reach the nationally expected standards in their work by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils are very well cared for and the provision for their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. All pupils are fully included in all that the school offers.
- The school's approach to raising pupils' awareness of and respect for the diversity of culture found in this country is excellent.
- Parents are very much involved in helping their children to learn because the school works very closely with them.

Improvement since the last inspection, which was in 1999, is very good. Standards have improved overall, including those in science and information and communication technology (ICT), which were key issues at that time. All subjects have proper schemes of work that ensure progression in learning for all pupils, the quality of teaching has improved considerably and health and safety procedures are now very good. The only area in which work is incomplete is in the use of ICT as a tool for learning across the curriculum, and the school has this well in hand.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is very good overall. Although a significant proportion of children have under-developed language, communication and social skills when they start school, their attainment on entry is broadly as expected for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, the majority at least reaching the goals expected nationally for the end of reception (the early learning goals). The national test results for pupils in Year 6 in 2004, the latest published year, were as follows:

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

The standards seen in pupils' work are above the national expectation in reading, writing, mathematics and science in Year 2 and well above the national expectation in English, mathematics and science in Year 6. Early indications are that the school has exceeded its targets for English and mathematics in 2005, the targets having been securely based on its rigorous analysis of the pupils' capabilities and prior learning. These targets, and those set for individual pupils, are equally

challenging and ensure that all pupils are given the same very good opportunities to succeed in their learning. The English results in 2004 reflect weaknesses in writing which the school has very successfully addressed. Work is almost always well matched to the pupils' learning needs. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve very well, many reaching the nationally expected standards in their work by the time they leave the school. Standards match the national expectation in ICT and are at least above the national expectation in all other subjects inspected. **Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** As a result, pupils flourish personally and academically; they behave very well and have very good attitudes to school, to learning and to each other. Attendance is above the national average and punctuality is good. However, a small number of parents still do not ensure their children's regular attendance or punctuality.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good as is the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is good overall in the Foundation Stage, although occasionally in the nursery, opportunities are missed to develop language skills through structured play. In the rest of the school, English and mathematics are very well taught. Literacy skills are very effectively promoted across the curriculum, and numeracy skills are satisfactorily promoted... Teachers plan pupils' learning very well, building it up step by step, checking progress at each stage, marking pupils' work thoroughly, and adapting it to suit their developing needs. As a result, all pupils understand their targets and the levels they are at, and are very clear about what they need to do to reach the next level. This and the excellent relationships throughout the school result in an overall very good pace and high levels of productivity in the vast majority of lessons. Overall assessment procedures are very good in English, mathematics, science and ICT. They are not fully in place in all other subjects, although in most they are developing well. An effectively planned curriculum, which includes a good range of enrichment opportunities, meets the needs, aptitudes and interests of the pupils well. The care, welfare, support and guidance offered to pupils are very good and parents are very involved with the school in helping their children to learn. The school has very good links with the community and with other schools that greatly enhance pupils' learning and personal development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, who is very effectively supported by very good governance and an effective senior leadership team. All statutory requirements are very effectively met and there is a feeling of very strong teamwork across all sections of the school community. Management systems are very good and governors ensure best value from all of their spending. They keep a very close check on all of the school's work.

PARENTS' and PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. They highly value what it does for them and are fully and effectively involved in all of its work.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

Although this is a very effective school, the areas for further improvement, on which the school is already working, are:

- to fully implement assessment procedures in all subjects;
- to improve the use of ICT as a natural tool for learning in all subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

All groups of pupils achieve very well and standards are well above the national expectation in English mathematics and science in Year 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's focus on writing has considerably improved pupils' achievement in English but reading is a relative weakness in Years 1 and 2.
- The emphasis on investigative work has improved standards in science.
- Challenging targets, based on the very good tracking of pupils' progress, ensure that all pupils reach the standards of which they are capable.
- The school has successfully helped pupils to catch up with their learning in ICT after the theft of the computers but there is still some way to go to use ICT effectively in all subjects.

Commentary

1. Children start school in the nursery with levels of attainment broadly in line with those expected for their age, although many have considerably under-developed language, communication and social skills. They make good progress overall in the Foundation Stage, though progress is faster in the reception classes than in the nursery. By the end of reception, almost all children at least reach the nationally expected early learning goals. They make particularly good progress in personal, social and emotional development, and in the development of language for communication and thinking. The weakest aspect of their learning is that related to linking sounds and letters. This carries over into reading and writing in Years 1 and 2, although the school has done much to improve writing, which it identified as a weakness through its rigorous analysis of pupils' learning. The results are evident in the higher standards pupils reach in that aspect of English in Year 2 and Year 6, and in how well they use their writing skills in other subjects. Early indications from this year's results for pupils in Year 2 are that standards have fallen slightly in reading but have risen in writing. The results for the latest reported year (2004) are as follows:

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.7 (17.1)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.2 (15.6)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	15.7 (16.7)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 71 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The school has identified that pupils' comprehension skills let them down in reading and following its success with writing, is set to improve reading next year. In 2004, standards in science were below the national expectation in Year 2. However, the school has worked hard to improve pupils' investigative skills, and early indications from this year's assessments show a considerable improvement in Year 2. The standards seen in the work of the pupils currently in Year 2 were above the national expectation in reading, writing, mathematics and science.

3. The picture for Year 6 in 2004 was as follows:

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.6 (27.5)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	29.3 (27.7)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.6 (28.7)	28.5 (28.6)

There were 68 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. The trend in results in Year 2 and Year 6 has been below the national trend in recent years but the strategies the school now has in place are reversing it. The decline was brought about by some well documented weaknesses in teaching and several changes in staffing, including those at management level. The current very perceptive monitoring and evaluation, which includes a very rigorous analysis of all test and assessment outcomes, have successfully tackled the issues to do with teaching and learning. Well thought out changes in the deployment of staff, the very good use of assessment information in planning and target setting and the rigorous tracking of pupils' progress have all contributed to the improvement. In 2004, the 'value added' indicators showed that the pupils did very well in relation to their prior attainment when they were in Year 2.
5. The standards seen in the work of the pupils currently in Year 6 are well above the national expectation in English, mathematics and science in Year 6. Early indications are that the school has exceeded its targets for English and mathematics in 2005, the targets having been securely based on its robust analysis of the pupils' capabilities and prior learning. These targets, and those set for individual pupils, are equally challenging and ensure that all pupils are given the same very good opportunities to succeed in their learning. Work is almost always well matched to pupils' learning needs. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number for whom English is an additional language achieve very well and mostly reach the nationally expected levels in their work. Standards are at the national expectation in ICT in Year 2 and Year 6, although they are above in control technology and overall achievement is very good. The school has successfully helped pupils to catch up on learning they missed in ICT following the theft of the computers. Although it is working hard now to extend the use of ICT as a tool for learning in other subjects, this is not yet fully embedded in its work. Standards in Year 6 are above the national expectation and achievement is good in all other subjects inspected except history, where standards and achievement are very good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils like school; they behave very well and show very positive attitudes to learning. Their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance and punctuality are good. Attendance has improved since the last reported figures and is now above the national average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships in the school, between pupils and between pupils and adults, are excellent.
- The very good opportunities for personal, spiritual, social, moral and cultural development have a strong impact on pupils' outlook and values.
- The school has high expectations of how pupils will behave. The pupils' response to these expectations is very good.

Commentary

6. Pupils enjoy school very much. They are keen to come; they are very enthusiastic about learning and they participate wholeheartedly in everything that is offered to them. They take responsibility very well and readily contribute to the development of the school, secure in the knowledge that their views and opinions are valued. The vast majority attend regularly and punctually. Attendance this year is above the national average and reveals an upward trend. However, a very small number of families fail to ensure the regular attendance of their children. The school works hard in conjunction with the Education Welfare Service to improve the attendance and punctuality of this small minority of pupils.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.2	School data	0.0
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.

7. Behaviour is very good in class and around the school. Pupils listen carefully to each other and like discussing ideas in groups. The very good practice seen in many lessons of responding to a talk partner enables everyone to share their views and help each other. As a result, pupils work sensibly in groups and independently, remaining well focused on their work and trying to do their best at all times. They respond very well to the high expectations that are quietly made of them and they feel that the school is a safe and secure place in which to learn. There have been no exclusions.
8. Pupils have a well-developed awareness of the needs and feelings of others and show a natural respect to adults and other pupils. Young children are successfully encouraged to become independent and to care for others from the time they start school. The provision for their personal, social and emotional development is very good in the Foundation Stage and sets them up very well for their future learning. Through the school's very successful mentoring system even the most reluctant pupils and pupils with special educational needs become successful learners. All pupils grow in confidence and maturity during their time at the school and quickly learn to take on a good range of appropriate responsibilities. For example, they help to organise assemblies and lunchtime activities and help in the playground to befriend younger pupils and newcomers to the school. The role of the School Council is central to the working life of the school with many pupils being given this chance to show additional responsibility.
9. The school promotes spiritual values very effectively through its very strong Catholic ethos, including collective worship, and the personal development programme in which pupils become increasingly aware of their place in the world. Activities such as investigative work in science, learning about the impact the past has had on the present in history, or reflecting on how technology has changed the world in which they live further promote this aspect of development. Moral issues are covered very effectively in lessons and in assemblies. Pupils have many opportunities to make a personal response to issues that concern them and this too contributes very positively to development in this area and to their social development. They have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. The adults in school set a very good example for the pupils and therefore pupils quickly learn to behave responsibly and to think about their effect on others. Social development is very effectively fostered in lessons as pupils help each other, working together as a whole class, in groups or as individuals. Lunchtimes are very civilised with pupils of different ages mixing together very well, chatting amiably and helping each other. Outside, pupils play very well together and the good range of enrichment opportunities in which they participate outside of school further promotes their social development.

10. Pupils have a very good understanding of their own culture because they are involved in local activities and visit a range of art galleries, theatres, and museums. The influence of other cultures is introduced through music and books and by direct involvement in multi-cultural linking projects. A very close link has been established with another Oldham school that has a significant number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The school works very effectively to ensure that pupils understand and respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others, and that they have a very good understanding of how to avoid being racist or negative in any way to anyone who is different from them. The school promotes racial harmony exceptionally well. Excellent relationships prevail throughout the school and teachers are both patient and kind. In all situations the pupils are treated with courtesy, respect and fairness. This very successfully encourages pupils to treat each other in the same way. The pupils describe their school as 'a friendly school where there's always someone you can talk to' and say their behaviour is so good because their teachers respect them. Inspectors agree with the pupils' views, which are also firmly endorsed by their parents.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The quality of teaching is very good; the curriculum is well planned; the care, guidance and support offered to pupils are very good; the school has a very good partnership with parents, the community and other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is very good and as a result, pupils learn very well. It is good in the Foundation Stage and very good overall in the rest of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in the reception class helps to dismantle the barriers caused by weaknesses in the children's communication skills and sets the children up well for their work in Year 1.
- In the nursery, staff do not always engage well enough with children as they play, to ensure play is purposeful.
- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' work rate and behaviour. This results in high levels of productivity in most lessons.
- The information gained from assessing and recording pupils' progress is used very effectively in planning.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to improve their work because it is, in most cases, very well marked and discussed with them.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	15 (40%)	14 (38%)	6 (16%)	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.

11. In the Foundation Stage, teaching places good emphasis on developing pupils' personal, communication and mathematical skills. Activities are usually well matched to the children's learning needs and adult support is effectively deployed thereby ensuring that children make good progress in all six areas of learning. Routines are well established, enabling learning to continue without a break even when, during the inspection, one of the reception classes was being taught by a supply teacher on her first day with the pupils. Sustained, effective planning in the reception classes results in a good balance between child-initiated and teacher-directed activities that successfully encourage independence. This provision is not always as clear

throughout the nursery, where staff sometimes miss opportunities to develop the children's communication skills through, for example, structured play activities.

12. Evidence of the headteacher's very good leadership and management is apparent in the way teaching and support staff have been skilfully deployed to maximise the impact on pupils' learning. Teachers respond very well to this, planning for and directing part time and support staff very effectively to support pupils' learning. This was seen in short observations of some literacy and numeracy sessions with pupils in Year 6, where pupils were very successfully challenged to work fast, work hard and give of their best. It was also evident in the sampled sessions where less able pupils and pupils with special educational needs worked with very well briefed support assistants. As in almost all lessons observed, the pupils' work was very well planned to help them reach their targets. Very occasionally, however, more able pupils are not given the demanding work they are capable of doing, as was noted in mathematics. The opposite was true in two very good ICT lesson with pupils in Year 6, where more able pupils were very effectively encouraged to move on at a faster pace as they worked out how to control the variables in determining how to park a buggy in a given space. Similar very good practice was noted in Year 1 and Year 6 literacy and numeracy lessons.
13. In most classes, whole class, group and individual work is very carefully planned and very successfully encourages independent and collaborative skills within a learning environment characterised by excellent relationships. In the best lessons, teachers call the pupils together at salient points in the lesson to reinforce learning objectives and to evaluate work in progress so that pupils may learn from each other. This was, however, absent from some physical education lessons and learning did not move on as fast as it might have done. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher deviated considerably from the lesson plan without good reason and pupils learned little. The pupils' work and the headteacher's monitoring shows clearly that this was not typical of that teacher. Because the work pupils are given to do is usually interesting, motivating and stimulating, they work at a fast pace in lessons, producing large quantities of high quality work. This was particularly evident in written work in English and history, where the very wide range of styles and types of writing showed the pupils' very good understanding of how to vary their writing for different purposes and audiences.
14. Overall, assessment procedures are very good. The assessment taking place during lessons is very good as, through techniques such as precisely targeted questioning, the teachers probe and build on pupils' prior learning. Very good use is made of this information and that gained from tracking pupils' progress, to set targets for individuals and groups of pupils, and to plan further work. The school has very recently reviewed its assessment systems and implemented a new marking policy, which is not yet fully embedded throughout the school. However, marking is very good overall. In most instances it refers to pupils' targets and gives them good pointers as to how to improve their work. Pupils very much appreciate this and they learn better because they know what is expected of them and what they need to do to reach higher levels in their work. This is because teachers involve them very effectively in assessing their learning, discussing their work with them and taking the time and patience to show them what to do. Pupils and their parents appreciate the value of the good range of relevant homework that is set, and pupils carry it out diligently with the help of their parents.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is good. It meets statutory requirements and the needs of all pupils well. A good range of extra-curricular activities and links with other schools provide pupils with many very enriching experiences. The school manages its accommodation difficulties well and, overall, staffing and resources for learning are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The well planned curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' progression in learning and to their overall very good achievement.
- Opportunities for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) are very good and the school promotes racial harmony exceptionally well.
- The school very successfully ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of the curriculum.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Space for indoor physical activities is restricted by the size of the school halls.

Commentary

15. Since the last inspection the school has made very good improvements in curricular provision and the issues highlighted in the last report have been very effectively addressed. Statutory requirements are met and all subjects have up-to-date, comprehensive schemes of work that systematically identify learning objectives and the range of work to be covered in each year groups. Thus pupils' learning is continuous throughout the school.
16. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is planned well to create a good balance between allowing the children to initiate their own activities, make choices and reach decisions, and directing their learning so that they reach the early learning goals. In practice this is working better in the reception classes than in the nursery.
17. The curriculum is underpinned by a religious education curriculum which teaches children about the Catholic faith in line with the school Mission Statement. A strong emphasis is placed on literacy, numeracy, science and ICT as the core of the curriculum, though the school also successfully promotes pupils' creative and physical development through music, art and design, and physical education activities, including dance. The curriculum for ICT has improved considerably as a result of improvements in staff training, teaching methods and resources. Good provision is made for the promotion of literacy across the curriculum and the promotion of numeracy and ICT is satisfactory. Much work has been done on starting to use computers as natural tools for learning in all subjects but this is not fully embedded in the school's work yet. There is a very good programme for PSHE which starts in the Foundation Stage with a strong focus on personal, social and emotional development. Good attention is given to sex education and provision is made to combat the misuse of drugs. Pupils are very well-prepared for the later stages of their learning. The curriculum ensures that pupils move confidently from one phase of their education to the next and very good support is given when pupils move to secondary school.
18. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities relating to sports activities, arts activities and a therapeutic gardening club all encourage pupils to mix socially with others and to take up an interest, which they can carry on beyond school. In Years 1 and 6, pupils benefit from lessons in French, which widen their knowledge of language and gives them insight into another European culture.
19. The school is proud of its status as a 'barrier-free' school and is highly committed to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone. Thus there is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for the very small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Effective early identification of special educational needs, alongside very good assessment and monitoring procedures contribute significantly to raising pupils' achievement. The good teaching provided in withdrawal groups by well-trained support staff parallels and complements that done in mainstream classes. The school has also recently appointed a coordinator for gifted and talented pupils to formalise the processes already in place for identifying and addressing the needs of that group of pupils. Pupils benefit from the school's very good links with outside agencies and specialist staff together with valuable input from their parents, all of which contribute constructively to the provision. There are a small number of pupils in the school who speak French as their first language. They are relatively fluent in English but do receive very good support when required. Overall, there is a good mix of

teachers and support staff and a good blend of youth and experience to meet the demands of the curriculum. There is a noticeably strong team spirit among all staff, which contributes to a positive working atmosphere and is a key factor in the school's success.

20. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. The headteacher, staff and governing body work extremely hard through an ongoing programme of repair, maintenance and development to address the many shortcomings in building design and condition. Neither of the two halls is large enough for a whole school assembly and physical education lessons sometimes have to be split in two to enable half the class to have enough space to work in to fully develop their physical skills. This slows learning down for the pupils, though staff work very hard to minimise this, using the outdoor areas as much as possible when weather permits. Despite the difficulties it faces, the school makes very good use of the accommodation, very successfully creating a warm, wholesome atmosphere in which every space is used effectively to celebrate pupils' successes across all their learning. It is very much a lived-in school. Resources are good and, in the main, well used by staff and pupils. For instance, the teaching of ICT is supported by a well-equipped computer suite which provides good facilities for teaching and learning. Each of the curriculum areas is well-resourced in terms of books and materials. However, the library does not have enough books to make it a useful area for developing research skills or independent learning. Nevertheless, each classroom does keep a stock of relevant fiction and non-fiction books which are used effectively to support these skills.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of pupils and provides them with very good support and guidance. It highly values pupils' views and very successfully involves them in all of its work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All staff work very effectively as a team to ensure pupils feel cared for and secure.
- Procedures to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment are very good.
- The school council plays a very effective role in the running and development of the school and overall, pupils' views are highly valued.

Commentary

21. The school has established a strong Catholic ethos in which each individual is made to feel valued and cared for. The importance of caring for others is constantly instilled through teaching and through example. As a result, pupils thrive in a very caring community and show a high level of care and responsibility for each other. Daily routines are very well organised and there are very good arrangements to ease transition both when children join the school and when they leave for secondary school. The school is justifiably proud of its barrier-free status and pupils with medical and physical conditions are made to feel especially valued and cared for. Parents speak very positively about the high quality of care and guidance provided.
22. The school's health and safety procedures which were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection are now very good. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out and the fire safety systems are regularly checked. The sub-standard and deteriorating building poses many maintenance problems, but the school gives the highest priority to matters concerning health and safety. All staff share responsibility for ensuring that pupils work in a safe, bright and cheerful learning environment. The school's arrangements for child protection are very thorough and all staff have received some training in this aspect of their work.
23. Pupils receive very good academic and personal guidance and support as they move through the school. The tracking of academic progress is very effective and extra support is provided where necessary. The recently introduced 'Always Child' behaviour system is very successful and is popular with pupils. The school has enabled some teaching assistants to develop a

mentoring role and this is very effective in providing support and guidance for the few pupils who face particular difficulties. The school also works in close liaison with external agencies to provide good support for pupils with special needs.

24. Pupils are proud of their school and show a genuine sense of ownership of it. This is mainly because the school listens to them and highly values their ideas. The school council plays an important and valued part in the running and development of the school. For example, pupils were unhappy about some aspects of the house point system which did not reward individual effort. The school closely involved the council in the review of the system and all pupils greatly appreciate the new system. The school council has been responsible for many recent developments such as the introduction of the healthy tuck policy, litter picks and the purchase of playground furniture and games. School council members talked very articulately and maturely about their many achievements. A flavour of the quality of the school council is given by the secretary's minutes which begin: 'The healthy tuck policy is running smoothly and there is no more litter and seagulls in the playground'.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a very good partnership with parents and they in turn hold the school in high esteem. Links with the community and with other schools are also very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has established a very constructive partnership with parents
- Parents provide a high level of support for the school and for their children's learning
- The work done to encourage respect for other cultures through purposeful links with other schools is outstanding
- Links with the parish community are very strong

Commentary

25. The high level of confidence which parents have in the school is reflected in the very positive views expressed through the pre-inspection parents' meeting and questionnaire. Parents highly value the school's open and welcoming nature and the very good communication between it and them. The school keeps parents well informed about all aspects of its work and is very effective in the way it consults parents, takes accounts of their views and responds to their needs. Parents are regularly involved in school reviews and consulted on new developments. For example, the full-time nursery was introduced following consultation with parents and arrangements are in place for the introduction of before and after school care.
26. Parents are very supportive of their children's education and the school encourages this very effectively by a good homework policy, regular communication in homework records and diaries and good guidance on ways that parents can support learning, including family learning courses. Pupils' learning targets are shared with parents at parents' evenings and in good annual reports on pupils' progress. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are very effectively involved in the reviews of their children's targets and in helping the school to determine their children's progress towards them. The school welcomes, encourages and values parents' help and many parents help in classrooms and in other ways, including through the commitment and support shown by the 'Friends of St Mary's'.
27. The school seeks to support and enhance pupils' learning and awareness of other world cultures through active links with a school in Uganda and a school in Ghana. It has also forged excellent links with a local school which has a large multi-ethnic population, enabling pupils to develop a very good understanding of the diversity of culture in Britain today. Through the joint choir and the enjoyment of music, pupils have formed strong friendships and learned respect for other cultures in the most natural way possible. The current production, Bugsy Malone, is to be performed with pupils wearing salwar chemise. Regular exchanges of

letters with the schools in Africa open pupils' eyes to the similarities and differences of life in distant cultures. Nearer home, the school has very good transition arrangements with the secondary schools to which pupils transfer.

28. Very good links with the parish community provide valuable support to the school community. Parish, school and parents come together to celebrate the sacramental programme which is fundamental to the spiritual life of the school. Very good links with the wider community include work with the police on the 'Reassurance Project' to combat crime, with the 'Crucial Crew', which involves all of the emergency services, and specifically with the fire service on the 'Learn not to burn' project. Involvement with the City Learning Centre and with the Catholic children's rescue charity further enhances pupils' learning and personal development. The work with the rescue society also reaches out to families that may from time to time need additional support.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management by the headteacher and governors are very good and all statutory requirements are met. Key staff lead and manage their subjects and aspects at least well and the deputy headteacher provides very good quality support for the headteacher.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head teacher is a very good leader with a clear sense of purpose, strong commitment and very high expectations of herself and the school.
- The governing body is very effective. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and work actively towards shaping the future of the school.
- Subject leaders are taking increasing responsibility and developing their roles well; the leadership of English, mathematics, science and ICT is very good.
- The systematic methods for checking the school's performance are very good, particularly in the main school.
- The commitment to the inclusion of all and equality of opportunity for all is very good.

Commentary

29. The head teacher, governors and staff have a clear vision for the school and a secure understanding of how the school can continue to develop and grow. The commitment and sense of purpose of the headteacher are evident in all of the school's work, and she has led the school forward very effectively since the last inspection. She has been successful in developing a strong leadership team who are helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The action taken to bring about further improvements following analysis of test results is having a positive effect on standards especially in writing. She has a clear view of the school's role in pupils' personal development; this results in staff preparing pupils effectively to take their place in the community. The role of the senior leadership team has improved since the last inspection. Staff are becoming very successful in overseeing and leading developments, checking on planning, teaching and learning and raising standards. The strong leadership of the headteacher and her deputy is evident in the ongoing progress of subject leaders, whose roles are strengthening as they grow in confidence and extend their skills further. There is a very strong sense of teamwork and mutual respect across all sections of the school community as a result of the good leadership by the senior leadership team.
30. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed as is the provision for special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator keeps a close watch on pupils' progress and checks the work of all support staff to ensure that the pupils' learning needs are being effectively met. This contributes to the very good progress the pupils make towards their targets, which are reviewed and sometimes altered, twice each term. The very high-quality commitment of the headteacher and governors to ensure a 'barrier free' school is very effective. Consequently all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the

small number for whom English is an additional language, are fully included in all that the school has to offer. Equal opportunities are very strongly promoted and cultural diversity very effectively celebrated in a climate of Christian values as detailed in the aims included in the schools' mission statement.

31. Governors have a very good view of the needs of the school and what must happen to promote further development. They feel well informed by the headteacher and play a crucial part in all aspects of the school's work. The governing body, who carry out their statutory duties very effectively, closely check performance management procedures. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously and are successful in holding the school to account if necessary. They work very closely with the headteacher and are able to both challenge and support her within a climate of mutual trust and open-ness. Governors are aware of the need to spend money wisely and are not afraid to seek independent financial advice in ensuring that they gain best value for money in their spending decisions. Very efficient systems ensure that the budget is used to best effect and in line with identified educational priorities.
32. The quality of management is very good. The school has very efficient systems that help it understand its current position and plan effectively for improvement. The performance management of teaching and support staff is well established and has had a significant impact in bringing about improvements. Staff have been well managed and a team has been created with many strengths that are deployed successfully to match the school's needs. The management of a difficult building, with maintenance problems and small classrooms without running water has been a particular strength and has not impacted adversely on children's learning. Very effective management has created a warm, welcoming and attractive environment in which pupils thrive and achieve very well.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1067768	Balance from previous year	80400
Total expenditure	1068667	Balance carried forward to the next	79501
Expenditure per pupil	2283		

33. A good proportion of the balance carried forward is already committed to major repairs, including the school's contributions to the resurfacing of the playground, safeguarding the budget in the light of predicted falling rolls and the Catholic schools' building fund, leaving an uncommitted contingency of £32,001, a reasonable surplus of just under three per cent. The school works very hard to gain best value from its spending and despite high maintenance costs it successfully secures pupils' very good achievement at a reasonable cost per pupil. It provides very good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

34. Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good** and has been maintained since the previous inspection. Attainment on entry to the nursery is broadly as expected for the children's ages. However, a significant minority of children have under-developed speech and language skills and some display anti-social behaviour. A very good induction programme and very good relationships with parents ensure that all children settle quickly into the well established routines. During the inspection, personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development were inspected in full. Knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development were sampled. The school's records of children's progress in the Foundation Stage provided secure evidence of their overall good achievement. The records also show that the majority reach the nationally expected early learning goals at the end of reception in all six areas of learning but the school's records and the children's behaviour and attitudes show they do best in personal, social and emotional development.
35. The quality of teaching is good. Staff work well together as a team and common approaches to planning and assessment contribute to the good quality provision for all children. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good, resulting in a well planned curriculum that links all six areas of learning well. Good emphasis is placed on developing the weaker areas, language and social skills in all areas of learning. Children with special educational needs are very well supported and make very good progress towards their targets. Effective transition arrangements ensure a smooth transfer from the Foundation Stage to Year 1, including that for the very small number of children who do not reach the early learning goals. At the time of the inspection, the nursery was being run by trained support staff; one of the reception teachers was off ill and a supply teacher was taking the class for the first time. It is a testament to the overall good provision and the children's very good behaviour and attitudes that their learning continued virtually uninterrupted. Resources are good and are used effectively to promote learning. The accommodation is satisfactory but, as with the rest of the school, it is in need of continual repair.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children successfully learn to initiate their own activities, make choices and decisions and develop independence, especially in reception.
- Personal, social and emotional development is very effectively promoted through the good example set by all staff.
- The school has very high expectations of the children in terms of their behaviour and attitudes from the moment they start.
- Children achieve very well in this area of learning because they are taught very well and they reach standards well above those expected nationally for the end of reception.

Commentary

36. Very good teaching skilfully promotes independence in learning alongside the ability to work well in groups and as a whole class. From the moment they start in nursery, children are expected to take responsibility for themselves, to think about others and to develop an awareness of the organisation of their classroom. As a result, they are polite, well-mannered, respectful of others. They listen very well to and form very good relationships with each other and with the staff. They readily participate in all that is offered to them and they help to keep their classrooms neat and tidy. Staff know the children well and set a very good example for

them especially in the quiet and gentle way they talk to them and encourage them to learn. Children take pride in their work because they are secure in the knowledge that is valued. This raises their self esteem, develops in them very good attitudes to school and spurs them on to do even better. The 'Always Child' behaviour system, adapted very well to suit this age group, is evident in every classroom. Children are proud to have their photograph on the 'Always Child' flower and keen to explain what it means. Their very good understanding of the importance of sharing and caring was evident in their reflection on the messages in the story of the 'Rainbow Fish'.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good; children make very good progress and the majority at least reach the early learning goals in this area of learning.
- Good emphasis is placed on developing language skills in all areas of learning but in the nursery, opportunities are occasionally missed to promote them through structured play.
- Teachers pay very good attention to helping children to read. Nevertheless, linking letters and sounds remains the weakest aspect of language development in this age group.
- Children's progress is very effectively tracked and recorded, and the information used effectively in planning.

Commentary

37. Many very good opportunities are provided for structured speaking and listening activities across all areas of learning especially in the reception classes. Children readily engage in the well-planned role play activities in, at the time of the inspection, the 'vet's surgery' or a 'café' with a number of menus to organise. Many children exceed the early learning goals relating to language for communication and thinking by the end of reception because the adults take every opportunity to encourage talk. They ask a range of stimulating questions to which the children respond well, thinking for themselves and using their imagination effectively. However, staff in the nursery do not always interact as effectively with the children and consequently they occasionally miss some valuable opportunities to extend the children's vocabulary and communication skills. Some children in the nursery use only single words and phrases and do not yet communicate in full sentences.
38. Reading and writing skills are taught very well using a commercial scheme linking letters and sounds. Although the majority of children reach the early learning goals, these aspects of language remain the weakest in this area of learning. Nevertheless, the children achieve very well and enjoy the rhymes and actions that help them to remember their letters and sounds. They develop good early reading skills as they read together and retell simple stories, answering in full sentences in the reception class. The whole school focus on improving writing skills is felt in this age group too. For example, in a lesson in reception with a focus on mathematical development, the stimulus was an interactive story about Red Ted. This was followed by the children doing some of their 'magic writing' about the main character on seaside buckets shapes before the mathematical activities began. Children gravitate naturally to the writing corner, actively choosing writing as an activity they enjoy and want to do well. By the end of reception, most children read and write their own names accurately and more able children make good use of their well-developed knowledge of letters and sounds to spell simple words. Their progress is tracked very thoroughly using the new assessment system, and staff use the information very effectively in planning and to provide the right amount of support for individual children to address their learning needs.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching is good; children achieve well and the majority reach the early learning goals in this area of learning.
- Teaching methods are suitably varied to support the children's mathematical development whatever their stage of learning.
- Good assessment information allows for appropriate planning of the next steps in their learning.
- The attractive learning environment stimulates the children's mathematical development.

Commentary

39. Counting is an important feature of each day and most children in nursery count to and back from ten without hesitation while reception children go well beyond ten. Focused adult support means that reception children have challenging mathematical experiences, for example, as they match fish and collect them in groups of varying numbers. The children's good achievement in this area of learning is the result of the effective use of different teaching methods that successfully reach all children even though their learning is at different stages. For example, less able children in reception accurately calculated the number of teddy bears in train carriages by physically counting them, while children with average ability explored the mathematical language of addition through train 'sums', using the word 'plus' confidently. More able pupils carried on with this work, accurately recording their calculations on paper. The information gained from the recently developed good assessment systems is used effectively in planning, ensuring that activities are adapted well to meet the needs of the children. At the end of the reception year, the majority of children reach the level expected in this area of learning. Mathematical development is further enhanced by bright and stimulating displays of shapes and number collections that serve to promote the children's visual recognition of these mathematical concepts.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD, PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Although no teaching was observed in these areas of learning, teachers' planning and records and the children's work show that achievement is good and the majority of children reach the early learning goals by the end of reception.

40. In **knowledge and understanding of the world**, children develop good ICT skills. In nursery, they work independently and in small groups exploring the keyboard and controls. By the end of reception, they have had experience of using a number of programs and have well established skills in controlling the mouse. Their learning is enhanced through additional learning opportunities such as gardening. Children talk enthusiastically about the planting process demonstrating a good understanding of the importance of soil, sun and rain, and a developing understanding of different animal and insect habitats. Classroom displays show that a good range of learning opportunities has effectively supported the children's knowledge and understanding of the world.
41. Teachers' planning, sampled observations of outdoor provision and observations of children working in other areas of learning all show that all aspects of **physical development** are adequately covered. Good planning ensures that all children experience a range of activities that stimulate their manipulative skills. They enjoy the many different activities that are available for them to develop their physical skills in the classroom. For example, they show good control as they co-ordinate pouring skills and working out which containers will hold more or less water than others. They handle pencils with good levels of control and further develop their fine motor skills through using modelling dough. The school has a good range of

scooters, tricycles and other wheeled vehicles which are used effectively to develop the children's physical skills. Children take turns and use the vehicles in co-operative play.

42. Good planning for **creative development** ensures that children have good opportunities to experience a wide range of creative activities often linked to other areas of learning. For example, some children in reception have made the scales of the Rainbow Fish, selecting from a range of shiny, eye-catching resources, while others explored the 'sea bed' created from threads in greens and blues. In nursery, the painting of animal masks links with songs and stories the children were learning. In the sampled session observed, the children's excitement and curiosity was roused by the effective use of animal puppets, and the 'vet's surgery' stimulated their imagination as they engaged in role play.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national expectation in Year 6 and overall, pupils achieve very well.
- There are many very good opportunities for pupils to write but weaknesses in the Year 2 pupils' comprehension skills have led to reading not improving as fast as writing in recent years.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The leadership of the subject is very good.
- Marking, though very good overall, is not consistently so in all classes.
- Pupils apply their literacy skills very well in other subjects

Commentary

43. Boys, girls, pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, achieve equally very well. Standards are above the national expectation in speaking, listening, reading and writing in Year 2 and well above in Year 6. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and contributes in very great measure to the pupils' very good achievement.
44. By Year 2, the majority of pupils read fluently and with good expression. Their knowledge of the sounds of the alphabet and combinations of letters is good. Nevertheless, standards in reading in Year 2 have remained relatively static in recent years. The school has identified that the weakest area is in comprehension skills and is set to work on this next year. Pupils have caught up on this aspect of reading by Year 6. In this age group, they talk knowledgeably about their favourite books and authors, discussing in detail, the plot, the characters, and different features of narration in stories. They have good extended research skills and use the contents and index pages of books confidently and accurately. They enjoy reading and parents are active in supporting reading at home. The thorough teaching of reading strategies contributes in great measure to the pupils' very good achievement and high standards in Year 6.
45. Speaking and listening skills are very well developed throughout the school, again as a result of some very good teaching. Pupils listen carefully to teachers, adults and each other. Many very good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop clear enunciation and understanding of conversations, as, for example, when younger pupils explain the sequence of a story's plot, or the finer detail of historical artefacts. Older pupils are articulate, confident speakers whether in a small group or in front of a larger audience. The use of 'talk partners' successfully enables the pupils to organise their thoughts from an early age and this has paid off in the maturity noted during conversations with pupils in Year 6.
46. The school accurately identified writing as an area for improvement last year and introduced what turned out to be some very effective methods of raising standards and achievement in this aspect of English. Pupils in all classes enjoy writing in a wide range of styles. Younger pupils attempt to write their own poetry, stories and lists of instructions for various activities and the quality of this work usually exceeds that expected for their age. Older pupils plan their writing carefully, benefiting greatly from the guidance provided by the teachers. They draft and edit their writing successfully in order to make improvements, often using computers effectively to do so.

47. A very strong feature of teaching is that learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and then regularly reinforced throughout and particularly during whole-class sessions. All teachers have high expectations of behaviour and relationships with pupils are very good. This has a positive effect on the pupils' work rate and progress, as most pupils try hard to meet their teachers' expectations. Pupils speak positively about their learning in class and their attitudes to work are good. When they work together in groups, they listen to each other's ideas and suggestions and value what each has to say. They enjoy their work and strive to complete the work set for them, including the very good range of homework that consolidates and enhances their learning in school.
48. Overall assessment procedures are very good. Pupils' progress is very rigorously tracked and the information gained is used very effectively in planning and target setting. This ensures that work is well matched to individual learning needs and contributes in great measure to the school's determination to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. Very good levels of support are provided for pupils with any degree of learning difficulty, for whatever reason, including those with special educational needs. As a result, these pupils often reach the nationally expected levels by Year 6. Teachers give very good oral feedback to pupils as they work and pupils' work is marked regularly, praising their efforts and setting appropriate targets for the next steps in learning. Particularly good examples of this were noted in the work of pupils in Year 6. However, in some other classes, marking does not give pupils enough information to help them understand what they should do next to improve. Nevertheless, in discussion, pupils were very clear about their targets and what they had to do to reach them, and move on to the next stage of learning.
49. The senior leadership team and subject leaders ensure that staff are all up-to-date with effective teaching methods. They have a very good overview of standards and achievement and have effectively established the right priorities for further development. There has been good improvement in English since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. The provision for language and literacy across the curriculum is very good and pupils apply their literacy skills very well in different subjects. Writing skills are used particularly effectively in, for example, in history and science and many opportunities are provided for pupils to use their speaking and listening skills in all subjects. Literacy skills are also developed effectively through the use of ICT as pupils draft and edit their work and present it in different ways using their word processing skills. The quality, range and content of pupils' work in English contribute very effectively to their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national expectation in Year 2 and well above it in Year 6.
- Very good teaching and learning results in the pupils' very good achievement.
- Teachers make very effective use of lesson time and homework to promote learning but occasionally, the work given to more able pupils is too easy for them.
- Leadership and management are very good. Regular checks on teaching and learning ensure that weaknesses are quickly tackled.
- The use of information and communication technology to support work in mathematics is underdeveloped.

Commentary

51. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well as a result of sensitive support by teaching assistants and planning that effectively targets their specific needs. Boys and girls play a full part in discussions and answering questions. This is an improvement since the last inspection when some girls were more reluctant to join in. The small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language make the same very good progress as their class mates.
52. Overall teaching is very good and this results in very good achievement throughout the school. For example in an excellent Year 1 lesson, a quick fire game of addition bingo had numbers tailored to pupils' different levels of ability meaning that they were all appropriately challenged and achieved well. Rapid mental games of 'Countdown' and 'Loop Game' for older pupils mean that pupils have to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems that stimulate their thinking and this raises standards in mathematics. The teachers' good knowledge of the mathematics programmes of study, their use of clear explanations and effective questioning motivate pupils to learn well.
53. Time is used well in lessons and a good range of regular homework ensures that new concepts are revised and practised, which helps to raise standards. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and are excited about using numbers in games and problem solving activities. However, in some lessons, not enough attention is paid to the needs of more able pupils, which means that they are not always sufficiently challenged by work that they sometimes find easy. Pupils' work is regularly marked and discussed with them and as a result, they know what they need to do to improve. Pupils take a pride in their work as for example in a Year 2 class where pupils were rounding numbers up and down to the nearest 10. They worked hard and were keen to show that they can get their answers right even when using numbers greater than 100.
54. The two subject leaders monitor and evaluate planning, teaching and learning well. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in standards and achievement and their action plan clearly identifies the next steps required to raise standards. The subject is managed very well as demonstrated by the decision to group Year 6 pupils according to ability for their mathematics lessons. This has resulted in pupils being given work that most closely matches their needs and where necessary, extra support is provided to a smaller group to address particular learning difficulties. National guidelines are followed well but the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in mathematics is under-developed. Overall, however, there has been good improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

55. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. There are some links with other subjects, for example, design technology and science. Some good links were made between ICT and mathematics as pupils in Year 6 used computers to solve mathematical problems. However, this is not a feature that is evident across the whole curriculum and in all classes.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good and standards are well above the national expectation in Year 6.
- Science is very well led and managed.
- The very good emphasis on investigative and experimental work is successfully raising standards and achievement.

- The use of ICT to enhance learning in science is under-developed.

Commentary

56. Overall, achievement is very good. Standards are above the national expectation in Year 2 and well above in Year 6. Boys, girls, pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language all achieve equally well and thoroughly enjoy their work in science.
57. Pupils throughout the school show good levels of curiosity and interest in science, talking enthusiastically about their work. They listen very well and confidently discuss their ideas with others. They work very well in groups and collaborate very effectively when working on their investigations. Opportunities to do these things make a positive contribution to their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
58. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are successfully encouraged to think scientifically. They eagerly participate in all activities, observing very carefully and thinking hard about why things happen in their investigations. Very good planning in Years 1 and 2 provide good opportunities for this. Teachers pose questions very effectively to develop understanding and by Year 2, pupils ask sensible scientific questions, make predictions, record observations and understand clearly the need for fair tests when investigating, for example, forces and movement.
59. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrate their very good knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts in well-presented work that includes a good range of scientific terminology as they present their findings. For example, in a very good lesson, they investigated the precise meaning of the word 'best' in relation to bubbles, discussing whether they were best in relation to durability, size, or quantity. Pupils in Year 6 understand very well the need for very close observation of what is happening during their investigations and they take careful measurements and record their findings in a variety of ways, considering what these findings tell them. They confidently and accurately interpret data and identify patterns in their findings. However, opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of science by independent research into books, documents, CD-ROMs and on the Internet, and their use of ICT to present data graphically is under-developed.
60. Teachers introduce lesson objectives very clearly. They present the main content and ideas in a stimulating and motivating way and check that pupils have fulfilled all the objectives well by building a strong conclusion to lessons in which pupils are successfully encouraged to evaluate what they have learned. Considerable thought goes into planning for the individual needs of particular groups; for instance, by ensuring that higher attaining pupils undertake and complete challenging tasks independently and that pupils with special educational needs are given appropriate support to enable them to achieve outcomes which are demanding for them. One unsatisfactory science lesson was observed where the teacher lost confidence and deviated from the planned lesson, resulting in a lack of pace and insufficient challenge for the pupils.
61. Overall, the pupils' success in learning is closely related to very good leadership and management and a very strong emphasis on developing practically based enquiry skills. Consistent and accurate monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning provide a well-informed view of the quality of science education throughout the school, and of pupils' standards and achievement. Very good assessment procedures ensure that pupils' progress is accurately measured and recorded, and that challenging targets are set for groups and individual pupils. All aspects of science are comprehensively covered. Statutory requirements are met and very good progress has been made in this area since its identification as a key issue in the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils achieve very well in ICT although the use of computers is not yet fully embedded in all subjects.
- Very good teaching has led to rapid improvement in pupils' progress after the stolen ICT equipment was replaced and the suite established last January.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

62. Standards match the national expectation in Year 2 and Year 6 but the control technology work observed in Year 6 exceeded national expectations. The quality of teaching observed in Years 3 to 6 was very good. Although no teaching was observed in Years 1 and 2, it is clear from the pupils' work that teaching is at least good in that age group. Pupils of all levels of capability make the same very good progress because the teachers take them step-by-step through the processes required to use the computer programs competently and confidently. As a result of this, lessons move fast and pupils are always fully engaged in learning. They are given many very good opportunities to check and improve their work by listening to others and by sharing their findings and expertise as they work. Very good links with a local secondary school serve to consolidate and extend learning control technology by giving the pupils the opportunity to transfer what they have learned, to programming and controlling a real buggy round a real track.
63. Very good leadership and management have brought the school a long way in a short time following the theft of computers earlier in the school year. This hindered much of the planned development in ICT but the school is back on track and achievement has accelerated greatly since the new suite was set up and resources greatly improved after the theft. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. A very knowledgeable, very well organised co-ordinator provides very good support and guidance for the staff. Very perceptive planning has ensured that the expertise of all staff has been considerably improved. A very well planned curriculum helps pupils to compare human input with machine input and they have a good understanding of the impact of technology on everyday life. Assessment procedures are very good. Although they are relatively recent, pupils are very effectively involved in them. They assess their own learning by, for example, keeping computer diaries which focus very effectively on what they have learned and what they need to learn next. Internet safety is very well covered. The dangers involved in using chat rooms and inappropriate websites are explicitly taught and recorded in the pupils' books, and very good guidance is given as to what pupils should do if they have any concerns or feel insecure in any way.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. Although pupils use their ICT skills satisfactorily to help their learning in other subjects, particularly at home, there is still some way to go before pupils use computers as natural tools for learning in all subjects. There are some good examples of ICT being used effectively in other subjects as, for example, in English, when pupils present their work in different ways and use the Internet to find out about famous authors. Mathematics related work includes creating and using spreadsheets to investigate the cost of organising a party, and the perceptive use of a search engine to find best prices. This contributes in great measure to the pupils' future economic well-being.

HUMANITIES

History was inspected in full and geography was sampled. Two geography lessons were observed and further evidence was gained from talking to pupils and analysing their work and the teachers' planning.

65. In **geography**, achievement is very good and standards are above the national expectation in Year 2 and Year 6. All aspects of the geography curriculum are properly covered and by Year 6, pupils have a very well developed geographical vocabulary. They used it very effectively to show their good understanding of what they had learned about rivers, mountains, the water cycle, and the different localities and countries they have studied here and abroad. They explain the water cycle very clearly and make knowledgeable comparisons between the different speeds of rivers depending on the terrain across which they flow. Pupils report that they find geographical learning very exciting because they are encouraged to become 'environmental investigators' to find out as much as they can. Their recorded work shows that they rise well to this challenge, making very good use of the very good opportunities presented to them to use their literacy skills. Their work in geography very effectively promotes their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teaching was good in the two lessons observed. The subject is well led and managed and there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils really enjoy learning about the past; they achieve very well and reach standards that are above the national expectation in Year 6.
- The quality of teaching is very good; there is a very strong emphasis on the teaching of historical skills and understanding alongside basic historical knowledge.
- Literacy skills are very effectively promoted in history.
- History contributes very effectively to the pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

66. Learning is made very exciting for the pupils in Year 2 as they explore historical artefacts to find out about life in the past. Pupils of that age have a well developed understanding of the differences between the past and the present, including in relation to their own lives, which is built on very effectively by Year 6. In this age group, pupils' work on Victorians demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of historical facts and timelines associated with the period. Discussions with them revealed very good levels of empathy with the Victorian way of life in relation to, for example, children at work and at play, and gender and class differences. Very good teaching enables pupils successfully to discriminate between fact and opinion in historical writing as they investigate and compare different historical sources, write their own diaries, for example, as a captain's log, and present their own accounts of historical events based on evidence they have researched for themselves.
67. Pupils in Year 6 use their writing skills exceptionally well in history and in discussion they showed very good recall of what they had learned and written about. For example, they talked with very good understanding about Britain since 1948, accurately recalling the work they had done on how people must have felt losing loved ones during the war, the setting up of the National Health Service, the shortages in the workforce after the war and the need to bring people from other countries to help out. Their work on immigration and on the reasons for the range and diversity of culture in Britain today is exceptional. They have a very good understanding of the concept of one world in which all are equal regardless of colour or creed, something that underpins much of the school's work. The very good quality of the many

different types of writing evident in the pupils' books shows a great depth of feeling, empathy and understanding that very successfully promotes their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

68. Although the present co-ordinator is new to the post, it is clear that the subject has been well led and managed. Pupils are very much involved in assessing their own learning through, for example, the use of 'true/false' grids in which they select the correct box in answer to the teachers' questions. All work is marked well with pointers for improvement through further questions, and most pupils do their corrections. Teaching and learning are checked and assessment procedures are overall good. The curriculum is well planned and promotes good progression in learning. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, design and technology and music were sampled and physical education was inspected in full. No lessons were observed in art and design or music, and one lesson was observed in design and technology. No overall judgements are made about provision in any of the three subjects but evidence from teachers' planning and pupils' work show that all aspects of each are adequately covered.

69. In **art and design**, the scrutiny of work in classrooms, corridors and pupils' sketchbooks show that standards are above the national expectation in Year 2 and Year 6. Observational work shows good attention to detail and pupils experience a wide range of different media. As a result of careful planning, the strength of work in art and design is the links with other subjects, for example, in the collage pictures of Victorian children and in art work based on studies of the Egyptians. The Year 6 sketchbooks have a list of targets so that pupils know what is expected of them during the year. However, there are missed opportunities to involve pupils more fully in evaluating their own learning by recording which of these targets they have accomplished. The quality of display throughout the school is very good. This contributes very effectively to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they consider the work of other artists and cultures or celebrate their own achievement and that of others. The Year 6 landscape pictures provide good evidence of collaborative work in art that serves to promote social development. There are plenty of good opportunities for talented pupils that successfully enable them to display their aptitude and fulfil their artistic potential through, for example, the art club.
70. In **design and technology**, teachers' use planned opportunities from national guidelines to ensure that all aspects of this subject are covered. In the one lesson observed, very good use was made of these guidelines to adapt the making of money containers into designing and making a case for pupils' rosary beads, which they had received following their First Communion. The pupils were supported well as they practised specific skills such as stitching, prior to selecting the most appropriate stitch to make their purses secure. The work displayed from Years 1 and 2 effectively illustrated the good range of work undertaken as they designed and made puppets, winding toys and fruit salad. Good links to literacy and numeracy were noted in their work and overall standards in Year 2 are at least in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement in Years 1 and 2.
71. No **music** lessons were observed and no judgements are made about provision, standards or the quality of teaching in this subject. From teachers' planning and from discussions with the co-ordinator and with pupils, it is clear that all aspects of this subject are at least adequately covered and the subject is at least satisfactorily led and managed. Very good enrichment activities, including instrumental tuition, the choir, the steel band, the 'Little Big Band', the orchestra, and opportunities to participate in musical events outside of school, all contribute in great measure to the pupils' enjoyment of and achievement in music. Music is used very effectively to foster pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, through its links with a school that has a very different cultural make-up from its own.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and therefore pupils achieve well and reach good standards in physical education.
- Pupils are enthusiastic, keen to learn and collaborate very well although older pupils are not always given enough opportunities in lessons to evaluate their own and others' performances.
- The subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic and dedicated subject leader.
- Lack of space in the junior hall restricts the quality of teaching and learning when large numbers of pupils participate.

Commentary

72. Several games lessons were observed, which had to be taught in the junior hall as a result of the inclement weather. In each session, well-planned and well-supervised activities and strategies were employed to give pupils the opportunity to practise and develop their skills of throwing, striking, intercepting and stopping a ball. Despite the constraints due to the lack of space, pupils demonstrated good standards of control and accuracy for their ages. They enjoyed their lessons very much but were seldom given opportunities to evaluate their own and others' performance and as a result they do not learn from each other as well as they might. Younger pupils in Year 1 showed good recall of previous dance lessons and rose very well to the constant challenge to refine their postures and movements using repeated and progressively complex patterns and sequences of patterns. In this lesson, the teacher used pupil demonstration very effectively to show others how to improve their work and their learning accelerated as a result.
73. Discussion with the subject leader, photographs and written information provided shows that all pupils cover the whole physical education curriculum through a specifically-tailored combination of commercial, local and national guidelines. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 take part in swimming lessons to promote their awareness of water safety, as well as developing their swimming skills. Virtually all pupils at least reach the nationally expected standard in swimming and a considerable majority exceed it. Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils have access to a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities including football, netball, basketball, gymnastics and dance where specialist coaching helps to raise standards. The good leadership and management of the subject has resulted in the successful achievement of a substantial 'Awards for All' grant to finance staff training, pupil coaching and the purchase of a good range of resources. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)

74. Although PSHCE was sampled and only one lesson was observed, it was clear that this provision permeates the work of the school and contributes in very great measure to its very good ethos. The development starts in the Foundation Stage with the strong focus on personal, social and emotional development and continues throughout the school, very successfully promoted in all subjects. It manifests itself in the pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour, in the high levels of care and concern they show for others, and in the very good understanding pupils have of their rights and responsibilities in Year 6. Good attention is given to teaching pupils about sex and relationships and about the dangers of drugs misuse. Additionally, pupil-based activities such as 'circle time' and the school and class councils make a very strong and effective contribution to this aspect of learning, successfully encouraging responsible behaviour and citizenship. These are major factors in producing the orderly community evident within the school and in helping pupils to care for themselves and for others. Pupils have a very good awareness of the need to care for those less fortunate

than they are and this manifests itself in successful charity fundraising activities and in the very well-developed links with pupils in Africa. Because their PSHCE development is very good, pupils develop into mature young people who leave the school very well prepared for the later stages of their learning and for life beyond school.

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	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	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	3
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
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).