

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MONICA'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bootle

LEA area: Sefton

Unique reference number: 104905

Headteacher: Mr P Kinsella

Lead inspector: Mr D Roberts

Dates of inspection: 3 – 5 May 2005

Inspection number: 267905

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed primary school
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 3-11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 424

School address: Aintree Road
Bootle
Merseyside
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Telephone number: 0151 525 1245
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mr G Foster
governors:

Date of previous inspection: 17 May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Monica's Catholic Primary School is a larger than average sized school. It currently provides full-time education for 424 pupils, including 12 full-time and 36 part-time children in the Nursery. Unemployment rates in the area are high, and the proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is above that found nationally. Less than one per cent of pupils are from families belonging to ethnic minority groups, none of whom are at an early stage in learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is currently above the average found nationally. On entry to the school, the intake of pupils represents a wide range of ability, but overall attainment levels are below those found nationally, and the language and mathematical skills of a significant proportion of the children is low. The school achieved the Activemark Award in 2000 and the School Achievement Award in 2002. Beacon status was first awarded in 2002 and renewed for two further years. The Healthy schools Award was achieved in 2003 and Investor in People status in 2004. The Basic Skills Quality Mark was awarded for the third time in 2004.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1743	D Roberts	Lead inspector	English Information and communication technology English as an additional language
19669	F Kennedy	Lay inspector	
17767	S Power	Team inspector	Science Geography History Special educational needs
14459	G Owen	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education
29504	S Herring	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Music Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school, which has outstanding features. It provides a high level of care for its pupils and promotes their personal and social development very successfully. The teaching is very effective, particularly in the key areas of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), promoting high achievement by the pupils in relation to their capabilities. The school is highly inclusive, and works hard and very effectively to provide a welcoming and supportive community where the Catholic ethos is strongly emphasised. It is very well regarded by its pupils, their parents and the local community, **and provides very good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- It enables the pupils to achieve highly in the key areas of English, mathematics and ICT.
- Standards, throughout the school, are well above average in English, mathematics and art and design, and above average in design and technology, and in geography and history at Key Stage 2.
- The quality of teaching is very good, particularly in the key areas of learning.
- By Year 6, pupils have developed excellent attitudes to learning and their behaviour is outstanding.
- The school provides a high quality curriculum, which draws very effectively on its excellent links with the community.
- The quality of leadership and management is of a high calibre.
- Although standards in ICT are high, its use to enhance learning in other subjects, particularly mathematics and science, is not sufficiently systematic.

The school has built successfully on the very good picture apparent in the last inspection, and addressed effectively the key issues identified in the previous inspection report. The school's rate of improvement during the last four years was above the trend found nationally.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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 **achieve highly** in relation to their capabilities and earlier attainment during their time in the school. Children make good progress at the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). They achieve, and in some instances exceed, the appropriate learning goals in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average in all aspects of English and in mathematics, and above the average in science. By Year 6, standards for age are well above average in English and mathematics

and above average in science. The inspection picture for English and mathematics is generally consistent with the 2004 National Curriculum Test results for Year 6. However, inspection findings for science are better than indicated by national test results, largely due to the action taken by the school during the past year to bring about improvements. Throughout the school, pupils, at all levels of attainment, achieve very well in ICT, where standards are above the average for age by Years 2 and 6. Pupils achieve well in most other subjects, and particularly well in art and design, where standards are well above average, and in design and technology, throughout the school, and in history and geography at Key Stage 2, where standards are above the average for pupils' ages. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **excellent**. This is particularly apparent in the pupils who are reaching the end of their time in the school, reflecting the school's success in promoting high standards in these important areas. Pupils show a strong desire to learn, are highly enthusiastic and keen to involve themselves in the wide range of learning opportunities on offer. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very successfully. The school works hard to improve attendance rates, which are currently similar to the average found nationally.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is **very good**. The school provides a high quality curriculum, which draws very successfully on its excellent links with the community and includes a very good programme of extra-curricular activities. All aspects of the curriculum are generally covered very effectively, although there is scope for achieving greater consistency in the use of ICT in some subjects. The high quality provision made for pupils with special educational needs results in their very good progress. Very good provision is made for the pupils' personal, social and health education, and the school is highly effective in ensuring that all pupils have equality of access and opportunity in all aspects of provision; this contributes significantly to the school's success in achieving the over-riding aim, expressed in the mission statement, of providing success for all of its pupils. The teaching is **very good**, particularly in the key areas of learning. At the Foundation Stage consistently good teaching helps children to settle quickly and achieve well in all areas of learning, and particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development and in acquiring early writing skills. In other year groups, the teaching is highly effective in providing pupils with a very good grasp of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Throughout the school, teaching assistants and support staff work closely with class teachers, and their work on specific curricular initiatives, such as the Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs) and the Mathematics Recovery initiative, enables the individuals and groups, which they support, to make rapid progress. Throughout the school, the highly effective use of assessment to help pupils to improve is a very strong feature in the teaching, contributing significantly towards their high achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is of a **high calibre**. The school is led and managed very effectively by the headteacher. He demonstrates clear educational vision and a strong sense of purpose, and is building effectively on the very good work of his predecessors. He is strongly supported by a very good deputy headteacher and leadership team and a highly effective governing body.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is very well regarded by parents and pupils. Parents are of the opinion that the teaching is good, and that their children are expected to work hard and make good progress. They feel comfortable in approaching the school when problems arise, and are of the view that the school is well led and managed. Parents of children starting school appreciate the arrangements to help their child to settle. Pupils appreciate the help that their teachers give them. They feel that they have to work hard, but acknowledge the help which they get when difficulties arise. Some pupils feel that the behaviour of a minority of children is not always as good as it should be.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Achieve greater consistency and a more systematic approach in the use of ICT to support and enhance pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics and science.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

The attainment levels of children on entry to the Nursery are generally below average. Pupils achieve **highly** during their time in the school and, by the time they reach the end of Year 6, standards in the key skills of learning (literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology), and in science, are at least above those found nationally. The school has built effectively on the good picture apparent at the time of the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- At the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception), children achieve well in all areas of learning and particularly well in some aspects of the curriculum.
- Pupils at both key stages (Years 1 to 6), achieve highly in the key areas of learning (English, maths and ICT), and in science.
- Standards in art and design are well above average, and standards in history and geography, at Key Stage 2, and in design and technology, at both key stages, are above average.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.

Commentary

- 1 Children at the Foundation Stage benefit from good teaching, and most achieve the appropriate early learning goals in all of the areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. Their achievement in developing early writing skills is above the average for age, and they also achieve above average standards in their personal, social and emotional development.
- 2 At both key stages, pupils achieve highly, in relation to their capabilities and earlier attainment, in speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is consistent with recent National Curriculum test results, which also showed pupils' performance to be very high compared with that of pupils in similar school in writing and mathematics.
- 3 By Year 6, standards are well above the average found nationally in English and mathematics, and above average in science. The picture in English and mathematics is consistent with the most recent national test results. The inspection picture in science is considerably better than that presented by the national test results, which indicated a well below average grade for achievement based on prior attainment. The improving picture is largely due to the success of steps taken by the school to improve aspects of the work in science during the past year. Taken over four years, the combined National Curriculum test results for English, mathematics and science, at the end of Year 6, indicate a rate of improvement which is above the national trend. The same results indicate no consistent patterns of variation in pupils' performance in terms of gender. The school has responded quickly to early signs of variations in the performance of boys and girls in writing, and taken positive action to address the situation.

- 4 Pupils at both key stages achieve very well in ICT, where standards for age are above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. They benefit greatly from a well-planned programme of work and access to very good resources, and are challenged consistently by highly effective teaching. Their progress is also helped significantly by the availability of an ICT support technician.
- 5 Pupils achieve well in most other subjects, and particularly well in those where standards exceed the average for pupils' ages. In art and design, standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are well above average for the pupils' ages. Standards in design and technology are above average at both key stages. In both art and design and design and technology, pupils benefit from a rich and varied curriculum as well as consistently effective teaching. Although it was not possible to observe sufficient lessons to judge provision in history and geography, examination of pupils' work produced during the course of the year indicates that standards at the end of Year 6 are above average in both subjects and that much of the work produced by the pupil is of high quality.
- 6 Teaching and support staff work very effectively to meet the needs of all pupils, in terms of gender, race and levels of attainment. This enables pupils, including those who are particularly gifted, to achieve well in relation to their capabilities. Specific initiatives, such as the Maths Recovery initiative and the Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs), have a very positive effect on the progress made by targeted groups and individual pupils. The very effective support provided by teachers and teaching assistants helps pupils with special educational needs to achieve highly and make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs).

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.1 (17.2)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	16.7 (14.8)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	18.2 (17.5)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 58 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.6 (29.2)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	28.6 (28.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	28.7 (28.9)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 59 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils show **excellent** attitudes to the school and their learning. They work hard and participate enthusiastically in all school activities. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils benefit from the very good provision that is made for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There have been no exclusions in the past year.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning.

- Relationships throughout the school are excellent.
- Behaviour is excellent.
- Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is very good.
- Attendance is good.
- Punctuality is good.

Commentary

- 7 As at the time of the last inspection, this aspect of the school is one of its major strengths. The school stimulates, in its pupils, a strong desire to learn. Throughout the school the pupils approach their work with great enthusiasm. Their excellent attitudes to learning are particularly noticeable in Year 6, reflecting the positive influences experienced during their time in the school. Their behaviour in lessons is of a very high standard. They work with very good concentration, take a pride in presenting their written work neatly and show confidence and a high level of interest during class discussion. A very strong sense of community is created by the way the pupils support one another in class and in the playground and the excellent relationships which exist. Older pupils respond very positively to being given responsibility as play leaders, and are currently working towards the local education authority's Young Leaders' Awards. They show a very mature sense of responsibility in carrying out their duties, which include organising playground games for younger pupils, helping to supervise the reception children in the adventure play area and taking out and putting away the play equipment.
- 8 In the Nursery and Reception, careful attention is given to promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development. The supportive, caring atmosphere helps the children to develop confidence and an increasing awareness of the needs and feelings of others. Reception children are on course to exceed the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development by the time they enter Year 1.
- 9 The school makes very good provision for the pupils' spiritual development. In assembly, the pupils' excellent behaviour and the quality of their singing engender a moving sense of spirituality. The prayers written by the pupils, following the death of Pope John Paul II, reflected their beliefs, sincerity and spiritual awareness.
- 10 The school makes excellent provision for the pupils' social and moral development, which is underpinned by Christian principles of loving and caring for others. Pupils are polite and friendly towards one another and relationships throughout the school are excellent. The school is highly successful in creating a happy, secure environment in which pupils can grow in confidence and self esteem, free from bullying, racism and other forms of harassment. A carefully planned programme of educational visits, which includes residential visits for pupils in Years 3 to 6, and a very wide range of after-school clubs strongly support the pupils' personal and social development. Fund raising for charity is an important part of school life and helps to develop the pupils' appreciation of the needs of others and their understanding of citizenship. During the past year the pupils have raised considerable funds for a range of charities, including Alder Hey Hospital, a local hospice, the Tsunami appeal and the Nugent Care Society.
- 11 Provision for the pupils' cultural development is very good. As part of the programme of study for religious education, the school organises a 'Faith Day' each term, when pupils throughout the school celebrate a major world religion, with visiting speakers,

special meals in the dining room and many other interesting activities. The pupils' cultural development is also promoted very successfully through the work in literacy, art and design, design and technology, history, geography and physical education and through visits to Liverpool Museum, York Minster, Speke Hall and other places of cultural excellence.

- 12 Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The school has made good use of national funding to establish a behaviour improvement programme, which is currently focusing on improving levels of attendance and punctuality. The key workers make a first day response to unexplained absence and work with parents and pupils to heighten their awareness of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. The pupils' attendance is good, and in line with the national average for primary schools. The rate of unauthorised absence is below the national median. Punctuality is good. The great majority of the pupils arrive on time in the mornings and lessons start promptly.

Example of outstanding practice

A very strong sense of community is created by the way the pupils support one another in class and in the playground and the excellent relationships which exist. Older pupils respond very positively to being given responsibility to act as play leaders, and are currently working towards the local education authority's Young Leaders' Awards. They show a very mature sense of responsibility in carrying out duties, which include organising playground games for younger pupils, helping to supervise the reception children in the adventure play area and taking out and putting away the play equipment.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.1
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Black or Black British – African

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
339	0	0
2	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is **very good**. The school provides a high quality curriculum for its pupils and works very effectively to promote their academic and all-round development.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are generally of **very good quality**, and highly effective arrangements are in place for assessing pupils' progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good, and at times high, quality teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes helps children to settle quickly and to achieve well.
- High quality teaching at both key stages (Years 1 to 6) is particularly effective in promoting pupils' key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- Predominantly good, and at times high, quality teaching in science promotes very good achievement by the pupils.
- Highly effective and well-focused teaching for specific groups and individual pupils contributes significantly towards pupils' high achievement.
- Consistently effective teaching in art and design, design and technology, history and geography is reflected in the high achievement of the pupils.

Commentary

- 13 Good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes helps children to make a successful start to their formal education. Teachers are particularly effective in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development (PSE), helping them to work happily with other children and to develop an increasing sense of independence. Children are made to feel secure and confident, and this contributes significantly towards the good progress which they make in all areas of learning.

- 14 At Key Stages 1 and 2 (Years 1 to 6), the teaching is highly effective in developing the key skills of learning in English, mathematics and ICT. Teachers show very good levels of knowledge and understanding and draw effectively on national curricular guidance in all three subjects. Teachers and support staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to achieving a good level of personal competence in ICT. The on-site availability of a support technician provides valuable assistance for teachers, and ensures that time is not lost when difficulties arise with ICT equipment.
- 15 Very effective assessment arrangements and the constructive use of assessment information are strong features in the teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. In these two subjects, assessment information is used carefully to set individual targets for improvement, which are shared with the pupils and their parents. These targets give pupils a good understanding of their own learning, and enable teachers to measure the pupils' progress with greater accuracy. The very effective use of homework contributes significantly to pupils' progress. Parents are informed of areas to be covered in various subjects during the term ahead, enabling them to play a part in their children's learning.
- 16 In science, predominantly good, and sometimes high quality teaching enables pupils to achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. In most other subjects, the teaching is usually of at least good quality. Teaching in art and design is very good, and this is reflected in pupils' high achievement. Much of the work produced by older pupils in history and geography is of high quality. In physical education, the teaching of swimming is particularly effective, enabling most pupils to learn to swim during their time in the school.
- 17 Throughout the school, teachers and support staff co-operate very effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. The valuable contribution of teaching assistants is particularly noticeable in some of the key initiatives to raise standards, such as the Accelerated Learning Programmes and the Mathematics Recovery initiative. The well-focused teaching provided for specific groups and individuals contributes significantly towards the pupils' high achievement in English and mathematics.
- 18 Throughout the school, teachers and support staff work hard and very successfully to make pupils feel valued, taking account of their needs in terms of gender, race, prior attainment and background. This approach increases pupils' confidence and helps them to develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils with special educational needs are helped to make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans. The increasing emphasis placed on supporting particularly gifted and talented pupils is reflected in their good progress.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 56 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (7.0%)	20 (36%)	24 (43%)	8 (14%)	0	0	0

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

The curriculum

The school provides a **high quality** curriculum, and has maintained and built effectively on the very good picture apparent at the time of the last inspection. The provision for educational inclusion is excellent, enabling the school to achieve successfully its mission

statement aim of providing success for all. High quality provision is also made for extra-curricular activities.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good provision for children at the Foundation Stage is based firmly on national guidance for the age group.
- The school provides a highly inclusive curriculum, which is extremely successful in providing equality of opportunity for all and in promoting high achievement by pupils at all levels of attainment.
- High quality provision is made for pupils with special educational needs.
- Very good provision is made for pupils' personal and social education.
- The pupils' cultural awareness is extended by opportunities to learn Spanish.
- High quality provision is made for extra-curricular activities, including sport.
- There is scope for making more systematic use of ICT to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

- 19 A good quality curriculum is provided for children at the Foundation Stage. The children's development is promoted very successfully in all six nationally agreed areas of learning, and is particularly successful in enabling children to acquire confidence and social skills, and to achieve a very good grasp of early writing skills.
- 20 Throughout the school, the curriculum is well planned and structured, and very good use is made of assessment information to set individual targets for improvement for pupils in English and mathematics. The curriculum for these two subjects is based securely on the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Very good use is made of national guidance which is often adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. There are clear policies providing teachers with useful guidance, ensuring that statutory requirements are met. Each subject is given an appropriate amount of time, and teachers and support staff work together very successfully to ensure that all pupils are included and involved, resulting in a highly inclusive curriculum. Close attention is given to the pupils' particular needs in terms of gender, race and prior attainment. There is a genuine commitment to promoting equality of access for all pupils, which is regularly reflected in teachers' questioning during whole-class elements of lessons, and in the organisation of learning activities. The arrangements to enable older pupils to learn Spanish extends significantly their awareness of other cultures, as well improving their communication skills and introducing them to a new language.
- 21 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Procedures for the early identification of specific needs are highly effective, and the positive action taken has a significant impact on pupils' achievement. The individual education plans prepared for the pupils are of a high quality, and targets for improvement are realistic and measurable. Parents are kept well-informed about their children' progress and have appropriate opportunities to participate in the reviewing of progress, and the setting of amended targets, at regular intervals. Highly effective intervention strategies, such as the Mathematics Recovery initiative, Springboard, and the Accelerated Learning Programmes, contribute significantly to the very good progress made by pupils requiring additional support.
- 22 Provision for personal and social development is very good. Strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' understanding of the dangers of alcohol and drug misuse, and pupils are

strongly encouraged to take an interest in their own health. Honesty, fairness and respect for truth are consistently reinforced and good behaviour is encouraged on a daily basis by all staff. The school's values are clearly visible in day-to-day interactions and in the mutual respect shown by adults and pupils alike. The curriculum prepares pupils very well for the next stage in their education and teachers work closely with staff in the receiving school in order to ensure a smooth transition at age eleven. High quality provision of opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities contributes significantly towards the promotion of pupils' social skills.

- 23 Throughout the curriculum, opportunities for promoting literacy and numeracy skills are taken very effectively, contributing significantly towards pupils' high achievement in English and mathematics. Although overall provision for ICT is very good and pupils' achievement in the subject high, its use to support learning in other subjects, particularly mathematics and science, is insufficiently systematic.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a **very high level** of care for its pupils and gives them very good support, advice and guidance. Procedures for seeking and acting upon pupils' views and ideas are very effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides its pupils with a safe and healthy learning environment.
- Pupils are provided with very good support, advice and guidance.
- The school makes very good arrangements for seeking and acting upon pupils' views.
- The school is highly inclusive.

Commentary

- 24 The school provides a high level of care for its pupils. Child protection procedures are very good, adhering to guidelines provided by the local education authority. The school's child protection policy is currently under review, and training is planned for the whole staff, to ensure that changes in statutory procedures are fully understood by all the adults working in the school.
- 25 The school buildings are clean, fire procedures are displayed clearly and accidents to pupils are recorded appropriately. The health and safety deficiencies identified in the last inspection report have been attended to. In 2003 the school achieved 'Healthy School' status, for high standards in a number of areas, including personal, social and health education and the school's physical and social environment.
- 26 Very good induction arrangements help the youngest children to settle quickly and happily into the Nursery and Reception classes. As part of the 'Sure Start' initiative, the school organises a weekly 'Start Right' group for parents and children, during the pre-nursery year. This is highly effective in helping the children learn through play and in preparing them for starting school. They learn to socialise and make friends and they get to know the Nursery and Reception staff. Parents can borrow books to read with their children, and this fosters a love of books from a very early age.
- 27 The Catholic ethos is central to all of the school's work. Pupils are cared for and valued by the staff and they, in turn, look after and value one another. Relationships at all levels are excellent. Pupils are kind and friendly, they make visitors feel welcome and they are courteous to all the adults in the school community. In lessons, the pupils are confident in asking and answering questions, secure in the knowledge that their teachers and classmates will respect their views and ideas. The school is highly inclusive and works hard and successfully to ensure that all pupils are treated fairly and fully included and involved in all aspects of school life. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. At the pre-inspection meeting with inspectors, the parents spoke very highly of this aspect of the school.
- 28 The pupils are encouraged to be independent in their learning. They each have their own targets for literacy, numeracy and personal development. They are given many opportunities to take responsibility, for example, as class monitors, house captains and play leaders. Fund-raising for charity extends their understanding of citizenship and heightens their awareness of the needs of others. The principles of a healthy

lifestyle are taught very effectively through lessons in science and physical education and through the daily life of the school, for example only fruit is allowed for mid-morning snacks. Pupils learn to manage their money efficiently through the pocket money club, which operates as part of the Credit Union and which the Year 5 pupils help to organise.

- 29 The school makes very good arrangements for seeking and acting upon pupils' views.
During the inspection, the parents expressed their appreciation for the sensitive way in which staff listen and respond to individual pupils' concerns. Pupils' views are canvassed on a regular basis, through questionnaires. The school council is well established and has influenced a number of school improvements. Careful account is taken of pupils' views when confirming priorities to be included in the school improvement plan. All classes, from Year 3 to Year 6, are represented on the council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established **very strong** links with parents and **excellent links** with the church and the local community. The school works in close partnership with other local schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides very good information for parents about school events, the curriculum and ways in which they might support their children's learning.
- Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning at school and at home.
- Links with the local community are excellent.
- The school has very good links with other local schools.

Commentary

- 30 The quality of the information provided for parents is very good. Through the prospectus, the governing body's annual report and regular correspondence, parents are kept fully informed about the life and work of the school. A very helpful 'Home and School Together' leaflet is sent to parents at the beginning of every term. This advises parents about the topics to be covered in class and ways in which they might support their children's learning. It also provides useful information about the homework timetable and the days on which swimming and physical education kit are needed. Before and during the inspection, the parents voiced their appreciation for this information. They find it invaluable in enabling them to support their children's learning.
- 31 Formal parents' evenings are held every term, when parents can discuss their children's attainment, progress and targets for improvement with class teachers. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved with setting and reviewing their children's targets and individual education plans. Pupils' annual written reports are helpful and informative, and provide parents with detailed information about their children's progress in all areas of the curriculum. The school's 'open door' policy, the approachability of staff and the sensitive way in which the school responds to parents' and pupils' concerns were very highly praised by parents during the inspection.
- 32 Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning, through their support for the home-school reading scheme and for homework in general. They also support the work of the school by ensuring their children attend school regularly. A large number of parents and other volunteers help regularly in classrooms, with

educational visits and with after school clubs. Parents support the religious life of the school by joining in assemblies and services in the church. A very good feature of the school's provision for children under five is the parents' and toddlers' 'Start Right' group. This group meets in the school hall every week during the pre-nursery year. The children are provided with a wide range of learning activities and given opportunities to visit the Nursery and get to know the Nursery and Reception staff. This initiative is highly effective in preparing the children for the Foundation Stage of their education.

- 33 The school has established excellent links with the church and the local community. The parish priest is a regular visitor and well known to the pupils and their families. Since 2002 the school has been a part of the local education authority's 'Schools for the Community' project, and during that time has striven unceasingly to make the school work for the local community. Highly successful initiatives have included family learning days and courses for parents and local residents, for example, Parents as Educators courses and courses for people wishing to give up smoking. As part of Sefton's Intermediate Labour Market scheme, the school has been involved with a 51-week programme of training towards employment for local community members, and has given permanent posts to several people who took part. A Credit Union collection point has been established in the school, incorporating a pocket money club for the pupils. The school nurse and the community police officer hold their surgeries in the school building, and are invited to the termly coffee mornings that are organised for parents. The school has been successful in its bid for a substantial government grant in order to provide the facilities to support extended school provision.
- 34 Very good links have been established with other local schools. It is currently involved in a three year programme, working with a group of school involved in the Janus Network Community Project, focusing on ways of improving boys' writing in Years 4 and 5. Very good links with the secondary school to which the great majority of the pupils transfer at the end of Year 6, facilitates a smooth transfer for the pupils to the next stage of their education.

Example of outstanding practice

Since 2002 the school has been a part of the local education authority's 'Schools for the Community' project, and during that time has striven unceasingly to make the school work for the local community. Highly successful initiatives have included family learning days and courses for parents and local residents, for example, Parents as Educators courses and courses for people wishing to give up smoking. As part of Sefton's Intermediate Labour Market scheme, the school has been involved with a 51-week programme of training towards employment for local community members, and has given permanent posts to several people who took part. A Credit Union collection point has been established in the school, incorporating a pocket money club for the pupils. The school nurse and the community police officer hold their surgeries in the school building, and are invited to the termly coffee mornings that are organised for parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is **of a high calibre**. The headteacher provides very good leadership, and is strongly supported by a highly effective deputy headteacher and leadership team. A very efficient and strongly committed governing body co-operates very successfully with the headteacher to ensure that all statutory requirements are met and to provide a highly inclusive school where every child can experience success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's clear educational vision and strong sense of purpose are important factors in this school's continuing success.
- Very effective leadership is provided by a knowledgeable and very committed leadership team.
- A very capable and well informed governing body makes a considerable contribution to the school's success.
- School improvement planning procedures are well-established and highly effective.
- Highly effective procedures are in place to monitor pupils' progress and the quality of provision throughout the school.
- Very strong emphasis is placed on supporting the professional development of staff.

Commentary

- 35 The very good leadership provided by the headteacher, including his clear educational vision and strong sense of purpose, is a major factor in the school's continuing success. The school has benefited considerably from highly effective leadership in recent years, and the current headteacher is building very effectively on the very good work of his predecessors. He is supported very effectively by the deputy headteacher and leadership team, whose knowledge and understanding of the different stages of learning contribute significantly towards a strong sense of cohesion and a very positive ethos for learning throughout the school. The leadership team, in turn, benefits from the hard work and dedication of the staff, at all levels of responsibility, and from the support and very effective guidance of a highly committed governing body. All of these factors contribute significantly towards the high quality of provision made for the pupils and their high achievement.
- 36 The governing body makes a major contribution to the leadership of the school. It achieves a good balance between providing support and promoting a sense of high expectation. It works very successfully with the headteacher to meet all statutory requirements, to ensure that the school provides equality of opportunity for all of its pupils, and to create a very supportive community where the Catholic ethos is strongly emphasised.
- 37 Very good leadership is also provided by the co-ordinators for subjects and aspects of the curriculum, who work closely with the leadership team to ensure that pupils are provided with a rich and challenging curriculum. Highly effective procedures are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning as well as curricular provision throughout the school.
- 38 The very systematic approach to monitoring progress and standards is an important factor in the pupils' high achievement. Very thorough assessment of pupils from an early stage, enables the school to identify potential as well as needs, and the careful tracking of their progress during their time in the school ensures that each individual is appropriately challenged and extended.
- 39 School improvement planning procedures are very effective in enabling the views of all relevant groups, including parents and pupils, to be taken into account when identifying the priorities to be addressed. The school works systematically towards its targets, which are expressed clearly and include resource cost and time implications, as well as appropriate criteria for measuring success. The headteacher and governing body, together with the highly efficient school administration, provide efficient financial management of all resources. This ensures that money is used very effectively to

address educational priorities. Strong emphasis is placed on staff training and development. Teachers and support staff benefit from opportunities to attend training designed to enhance their skills in various areas of the curriculum. Some of the school's teachers, who are particularly knowledgeable and gifted in certain aspects of the curriculum, share their particular expertise with teachers in other schools as well as with their own colleagues.

- 40 All resources and the accommodation are managed very effectively. Learning resources are generally of high quality and the limitations of the accommodation are successfully overcome, ensuring that curricular opportunities for the pupils are not restricted in any way. The headteacher and governing body are fully aware of accommodation deficiencies, which are due to be addressed in the near future by an extensive building programme. A substantial proportion of money was carried forward from 2003/4 in order to meet the anticipated cost of new equipment and furniture for the new accommodation. All areas of the school are well maintained by a highly efficient caretaker and cleaning staff. The quality of the learning environment is considerably enhanced by displays of pupils' work, which are of a high standard and used effectively to celebrate pupils' achievement, support their learning and encourage further enquiry.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,349,871	Balance from previous year	198,796
Total expenditure	1,200,721	Balance carried forward to the next	347,946
Expenditure per pupil	2,633		

Community Provision

The school makes **excellent** community provision. It is very well placed to make full use of the extended school facilities, which will be included in the new buildings to be completed in the near future.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Imaginative and highly effective strategies are used to promote community links.
- The school knows the locality well and has successfully fostered excellent relationships.
- The school is highly motivated to provide facilities and support for its community.
- The school draws very effectively on its community links, which make an exceptionally important contribution towards the school's success.

Commentary

- 41 The school is highly committed to providing support and facilities for its community, and is only restricted by accommodation limitations, which are soon to be overcome by an extensive building programme. The headteacher, governing body and staff demonstrate a strong unity of purpose in this area, and the very positive benefits of the excellent links with the community are apparent throughout the school.
- 42 The school knows the locality well and has fostered excellent relationships. Very strong links have been established between the school and parish and between home and school. There is a strong commitment to promoting the Catholic ethos, and the parish priest is a regular visitor to the school. Family learning days and courses for parents and local residents, address educational issues designed to help parents to support their children, for example, and general issues, such as ways of giving up smoking. The school was recently involved in a local authority training scheme, designed to help local residents gain employment. The arrangements to enable the school nurse and the community police officer to hold regular surgeries in the school are simple but thoughtful ideas which are greatly appreciated by the community.
- 43 Consultation with individuals from the community and from external organisations indicates the high regard in which the school is held. Examination of work produced throughout the school, initiated by a visit to the immediate community or further afield, indicates the exceptional contribution made by community links to the children's education. Many imaginative and highly effective strategies strengthen community links and enhance pupils' education. School projects involve visits to parts of the community as a starting point for educational activities. For example, Year 6 pupils visited a park, which had been vandalised over a period of time. They took photographs to capture evidence of the damage, and proceeded to write letters to relevant organisations in order to draw attention to the situation. They applied their increasing skills in persuasive writing very effectively when completing the letters. The project not only developed the pupils' social and citizenship skills and their knowledge of and respect for the community, but also enabled them to extend their writing and communication skills significantly.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children at the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) is **good**. This is a similar picture to that which was apparent at the time of the last inspection.

When children start in the Nursery, their attainment levels are generally below what is usual for their age. Consistently good teaching in most areas of learning, and particularly effective teaching in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development (PSE) and in their early writing skills, enables children to make significant progress and achieve well during their time at the Foundation Stage.

Very good arrangements are in place for introducing children to the Nursery, ensuring that they settle quickly into school life. The Foundation Stage indoor accommodation is bright and attractive with vibrant displays to enhance and celebrate children's learning. The school recognises that the current outdoor areas for reception children are below standard. They are due to be improved considerably as part of a substantial building programme to commence in the near future. In the meantime, Foundation Stage staff work hard to create opportunities for reception children to have exclusive use of parts of the main playground, but its use as an outdoor learning area for young children is restricted. Resources for learning are generally of very good quality, and are used effectively in all areas of learning.

Teaching is generally good throughout, and very good assessment procedures, based on close observation of children in different situations, are used very effectively to plan work that closely matches the needs of individual children. The tailoring of work to challenge individual children and groups is enhanced by the very good level of skilled support staff, so all children achieve well. Children's special needs are identified at a very early stage, and the very good support they receive helps them to progress very quickly.

The curriculum is good overall with particular strengths in the development of PSE and children's early writing skills. Activities are interesting and practical and meet the needs of young children well. A strong feature is the imaginative use of a theme to make strong links between learning. This was seen in the planning of work after the very good visit to Farmer Ted's farm. Children wrote extensively about their visit, enjoyed books about farms in their literacy sessions and enjoyed the role-play in the imaginative play areas, set up as a farm and a vet's surgery.

The Foundation Stage is led and managed well. A very good feature is the strong sense of teamwork between all adults, who work very harmoniously together for the benefit of the children.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children respond well to the staff's high expectations of them in terms of behaviour and sense of responsibility.
- Clear rules and routines are consistently applied, so children feel secure.

- Activities are interesting, and help children to develop very good attitudes to learning.

Commentary

- 44 Teaching is very good in this area of learning, enabling children to achieve very well. By the time they enter Year 1, they have developed attitudes and social skills, which are above average for their age.
- 45 The school rightly gives high priority to this area, which permeates all aspects of learning. There is a high expectation from the earliest age for children to take responsibility, for example, nursery children tidy away the equipment used for a particular activity, and reception children put apparatus out safely for physical education lessons, with appropriate adult support. This helps children to develop a good level of independence. Clear rules are applied consistently, so children know what is expected of them. They respond well to the high expectations which staff have for their behaviour and understand, for example, that it is necessary to put their hands up to answer a question. Teachers and support staff plan a good range of interesting activities, promoting good attitudes by the children to their work. This was evident, for example, when a group of nursery children sustained concentration for lengthy periods of time to complete a painting, while in Reception, children were observed working for a lengthy period on a piece of extended writing.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Writing skills are taught very well.
- Children are given many opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

- 46 Children enter the Nursery with below average language skills and particular weaknesses in speaking and listening. Very good teaching enables children to achieve very well. By the time they enter Year 1, most have attained the appropriate early learning goals for their age, and the writing skills of many are above average.
- 47 Children are encouraged to talk and answer questions in all activities. A good feature is the way in which adults join in with children in the imaginative play area, for example, the nursery nurse encouraged children in the Nursery to talk by using puppets imaginatively.
- 48 Reading skills are developed well through the systematic teaching of letter sounds and regular opportunities for sharing a big book. Children are encouraged to join in a repeated refrain and they soon anticipate where to join in. All children, including those in the Nursery, take a book home each night to share with their parents, and this develops a love of books from an early age. Reception children have a reading book that is well matched to their ability, which they share regularly with an adult at school, enabling all children to progress at a good rate.
- 49 A considerable strength in the teaching is the way in which writing skills are developed by giving children extensive opportunities to write for different purposes. They learn to make marks in the Nursery, with many succeeding in writing their own name. In Reception, very good use is made of visits to create a stimulus for writing.

For example, the children's visit to a farm created many writing opportunities, such as listing the animals they had seen and creating posters requesting people to keep the gates closed. The quality of some of the writing describing the visit was outstanding.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Numeracy skills are developed very effectively.
- The development of children's early knowledge and understanding of shape, space and measures is less systematic.

Commentary

50 Teaching is good, enabling children to achieve well and attain the appropriate early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Basic numeracy skills are developed very successfully. Every opportunity is taken for children to count, such as counting groups of toy animals in the Nursery. In a good lesson in Reception the teacher encouraged the children to use actions, such as clapping, to help them develop an idea of patterns in counting, helping them to gain an early understanding of tens and units. The children responded with delight at the teacher's mock exasperation, as they succeeded in her challenge to count to even higher numbers, with many children counting successfully to a hundred. Work is well planned to challenge and support different groups so that higher attaining children become secure in adding numbers to make 20, whilst others are able to combine two groups to make numbers to 10 using a number line. The curriculum is highly successful in promoting children's numeracy skills, but the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills in the areas of shape, space and measures is addressed less systematically.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-chosen visits enhance children's learning.
- Computing skills are developed systematically.
- Access to an outdoor area for reception children is restricted.

Commentary

51 Teaching is good, enabling children to achieve well and attain the appropriate early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. A strong feature in the learning is the way visits are used to enhance children's learning and provide a good focus for a topic. This was evident, for example, in the very good activities based on the farm visit. Children learned a lot about animals and their young, and also compared themselves, when they were babies, with how they are today. Children have regular sessions in the ICT suite, where skills, such as controlling the mouse, writing their names and printing their work, are developed successfully, with very good support from a generous number of skilled adults. Nursery children are used to the interactive whiteboard, developing a good awareness of the use of technology from an early age. They use a wide range of construction materials, including discarded boxes, to make intricate models. The school tries hard to arrange for reception

children to have exclusive access to the outside area for part of the day, but as the area is also used by older children, it cannot be equipped as an outdoor classroom to support ongoing learning in this area. Restrictions are, therefore, placed on the potential of outdoor learning for extending children's experiences and achievement.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Clear instructions and demonstrations help children to improve their skills.

Commentary

52 Teaching in this area of learning is good, so children achieve well and attain recommended levels by the start of Year 1. Systematic teaching of skills, including good use of demonstration, helps children to make good progress in developing their physical skills. This was evident, for example, during sewing activities in which the skilled support assistant guided children in threading their needle and wool, through the canvas, to good effect. In a good lesson in the hall, the specialist physical education teacher showed children how to perform a log roll, and drew the group's attention to the children who were performing particularly well. This helped other children to improve their arm movements. Regular use of the large hall helps children to develop a good sense of space. Children are taught about a healthy diet and this is reinforced by the provision of fresh fruit each day.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The imaginative play areas are exceptionally well organised.

Commentary

53 The quality of teaching is good, promoting good achievement by the children, who attain the recommended Early Learning Goals before entering Year 1. A very strong feature in the provision, is the care taken to plan exciting, imaginative play areas. Children's learning is considerably enhanced by adults joining in the role-play. This was seen in a reception class when the teacher, dressed as a farmer, went into character and joined children *on the farm*. The children soon followed suit and brought considerable imagination to their roles. This also provided a very good opportunity for children to develop their vocabulary and improve their speaking and listening skills.

54 Work on display shows that the children use a wide range of materials to draw and paint. Nursery children, for example, looked closely at daffodils to produce pastel drawings of good quality, and reception children painted detailed pictures of animals.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality teaching is the most important factor in promoting high achievement by the pupils.
- The excellent way in which pupils' writing skills are developed is an outstanding feature in the provision.
- Very good planning and highly effective assessment procedures ensure that pupils are challenged appropriately in all aspects of the subject.
- Pupils benefit greatly from a wide range of strategies to help them achieve their full potential.
- Close co-operation between teachers, teacher assistants and other support staff ensures that the needs of all pupils are met fully.
- The subject is led and managed very effectively.

Commentary

- 55 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 (Key Stage 1), achieve highly in all aspects of English. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading and writing are well above the national average. This judgement is consistent with the results of the National Curriculum tests taken in 2004, which also showed the pupils' performance in writing to be very high compared with those in similar schools. Pupils also achieve highly in Years 3 to 6 (Key Stage 2), and by the end of Year 6, standards for age are well above those found nationally and consistent with recent national test results. The school has built successfully on the very good picture apparent at the time of the last inspection, when standards at the end of Year 6 were judged to be above average.
- 56 Throughout the school, the strong emphasis placed on developing pupils' skills in speaking and listening is reflected in the confidence and competence of pupils as they move close to the end of their time in the school. They show a capacity to vary expression and vocabulary to engage the listener, and to use their skills confidently to express views and ask questions. Reading skills are also developed very effectively. By the end of their time in the school, pupils read accurately and fluently with good expression, and derive great enjoyment from their reading. They talk confidently about their preferences, in terms of authors and types of books, and explain enthusiastically why they like particular characters in the various stories which they have read.
- 57 The excellent provision made for the development of pupils' writing skills is an outstanding feature throughout the school. Children at the Foundation Stage benefit from the very careful attention given to the development of their early writing skills. High quality teaching and the imaginative use of a wide range of well planned strategies help pupils to make excellent progress from Year 1 to Year 6. By the end of Year 6, they demonstrate a capacity to adapt their writing to suit different purposes and audience. They make very good use of new skills acquired during literacy lessons to enhance the quality of their extended writing. Their written work is lively and thoughtful, makes correct use of punctuation and demonstrates well developed handwriting that is neat

and legible. The writing of a substantial proportion of higher attaining pupils is varied and interesting, and successfully engages and sustains the reader's interest.

- 58 The very effective use of resources to support teaching and learning is also a strong feature in the provision. Well selected texts for the introductory elements of literacy lessons, for example, help to stimulate pupils and capture their attention. In addition, very good use is made of interactive whiteboards to present lessons and help pupils to participate during the whole-class elements of lessons.
- 59 Class teachers and support staff co-operate successfully to meet the particular needs of individuals and groups of pupils. They take careful account of the pupils' race, gender and ability, and give close attention to monitoring pupils' performance in order to ensure that they work to their potential. Arrangements to set pupils according to their prior attainment for some lessons or part of lessons help teaching and support staff to provide work which is appropriately challenging for different groups of pupils. Well-planned and consistently implemented strategies, such as the ALPs initiative help certain categories of pupils to overcome barriers to learning and achieve their potential. The very successful use of work completed at home to extend learning is also a strong feature in the provision.
- 60 Teachers are highly successful in ensuring that all pupils are included and involved appropriately in all aspects of the subject. Very good provision is made for those with special educational needs, who make very good progress towards the targets set in their IEPs. The success of the growing emphasis placed on helping gifted or talented pupils to make progress is reflected in their increasingly good achievement.
- 61 The high calibre of subject leadership and management is an important factor in the excellent provision. Very good curricular planning, which cover all aspects of English effectively, and highly effective assessment procedures ensure that pupils, at all levels of attainment, are challenged appropriately. The setting of individual targets for improvements in various aspects of English, give pupils a good understanding of their own learning. The targets also help parents to contribute towards their children's learning at home.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 62 Excellent use is made of opportunities for promoting pupils' literacy skills during work in other subjects. In history and geography, for example, pupils regularly write at length about aspects of their studies, and teachers place consistent emphasis on improving the pupils' reading and writing as well as their knowledge and understanding in the particular subject being taught. ICT is also used very effectively to enhance the development of pupils' literacy skills. The very good use of interactive whiteboards to capture pupils' attention and facilitate a high level of participation during the introductory elements of literacy lessons, for example, makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement.

MATHEMATICS

The school makes **very good** provision in mathematics. It is characterised by high quality teaching that draws extensively on the guidance provided by the National Numeracy Strategy enabling pupils to make very good progress and achieve high standards in relation to their prior attainment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully included and make very good progress.
- The teaching is generally of high quality.
- Regular monitoring has a positive impact on standards.
- A highly structured approach to assessment and rigorous analysis of test results help teachers to identify aspects of the subject that need to be improved.
- Teaching promotes excellent attitudes by pupils towards learning in mathematics.
- The use of ICT to support learning is inconsistent.

Commentary

- 63 Pupils achieve very well throughout the school, and standards in Years 2 and 6 are well above the average for the pupils' age. This represents continuing improvements since the last inspection, when standards were judged to be above average. Basic skills are taught very effectively. During their time in the school, pupils develop a highly effective recall of number facts, a very good mathematical vocabulary and a capacity to select appropriate strategies to solve challenging problems. Inspection findings are consistent with recent National Curriculum test results. However, the achievement of pupils reaching the end of Year 6 is considerably better than that indicated by national test statistics, based on the performance of the same cohort of pupils when in Year 2. Pupils benefit significantly from the arrangements to group them according to prior attainment. This enables the work to be matched closely to the needs of pupils in the groups, helping them to succeed and make rapid progress. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, benefit from these arrangements. This is reflected in the fact that a very substantial proportion of Year 6 pupils work at levels which are above those expected for their age.
- 64 Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress towards the targets set in their IEPs. Class teachers and support staff show very good awareness of their needs and provide work that is well matched to their abilities. Much care is taken to vary the difficulty of the questions asked in oral sessions, and to ensure that all ability levels are included and involved in all aspects of the work. Highly effective intervention strategies help particular groups and individual pupils to overcome barriers to learning and progress very well. A highly successful, and nationally acclaimed, Mathematics Recovery programme, has been developed by the school. All teaching assistants have been specifically trained to teach the programme and they provide excellent support and make a significant contribution to the high achievement of pupils.
- 65 The quality of teaching is generally very good, and is regularly of high quality in Years 5 and 6. Most successful lessons are characterised by lively introductions that capture pupils' interest and imagination. A sharp pace is maintained throughout, and an appropriate balance between teacher input and pupil activity is achieved in most lessons. Teachers ask challenging questions that extend pupils' learning, and the work is carefully prepared and well matched to the abilities of the pupils. In a minority of lessons, better use could be made of the plenary sessions, at the end of lessons, to review, consolidate and extend pupils' learning. In the very best lessons, this is a good feature, with teachers providing opportunities for pupils to explain their methods as well giving them a clear idea of what they are going to do in the next stage of learning. Regular testing to check pupils' progress is carried out very effectively, and the results are carefully monitored in order to identify areas for further improvements.

66 Very effective class management promotes excellent attitudes and behaviour, particularly by older pupils. Relationships are constructive and supportive, and pupils are often engrossed in their work and show an ability to maintain concentration for long periods.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67 Investigative work and problem solving opportunities in subjects such as science, contribute significantly to pupils' increasing knowledge and understanding of mathematics. Although there are some good examples of ICT being used to support learning in the subject, this is not a consistent feature throughout the school, and there is scope for a more systematic approach.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school achieve very well in relation to their capabilities.
- Teaching is predominantly good and at times of high quality, particularly in Year 6.
- Pupils' high standards of behaviour and very positive attitudes are significant factors in their very good achievement.
- The subject is led very effectively.
- There is scope for making greater use of ICT to support learning in science.

Commentary

68 Pupils throughout the school achieve very well in relation to their capabilities. In Year 6, the rate of achievement accelerates significantly due to high quality teaching that is highly successful in developing pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding. By the ages of seven and 11, pupils achieve standards that are above those expected nationally. The inspection picture in science is significantly better than that indicated by the most recent national test results for Year 6 pupils. This is due to the close attention given to the subject during the past year and the success of action taken to improve standards. The current picture is broadly similar to that which was apparent at the time of the last inspection, but an increasing proportion of pupils now achieve the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well in relation to their abilities due to the very good quality support they are given in lessons.

69 The quality of teaching is predominantly good throughout the school and, at times, it is of high quality, particularly in Year 6. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do, and plan lessons carefully to give maximum opportunities for pupils to engage in practical, investigative learning. This enables pupils to make great strides in developing their scientific knowledge and understanding and promotes very good attitudes towards the subject. Although scientific enquiry is not as strong as other areas of the subject, pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of the principles of fair testing through regular experience of practical investigation.

70 The most effective teaching makes high demands on pupils' thinking and promotes very good learning of scientific enquiry skills. In an excellent lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils made rapid strides in learning about reliability in scientific enquiry when they carried out an investigation into the rate at which different quantities of sugar dissolve. They understood fully, the need for fairness in controlling the different aspects of the investigation and for accuracy in measurement, in order for the results to be reliable. The inspirational teaching made high demands of pupils' thinking skills and communicated the purpose of the activity with total clarity, so that pupils knew what was expected of them, and strove to meet the teacher's expectations, with complete success.

71 Very effective assessment arrangements are well established and contribute significantly to the pupils' high achievement. Teachers' marking is very effective in praising effort and telling pupils what they do well, but in some instances insufficient emphasis is placed on informing pupils about what they need to do in order to

improve. The use of ICT to support learning in science has not yet been established as a consistent feature in the provision and is not addressed regularly in teachers' planning. This has already been identified by the school as an area for further development. Science lessons make a very good contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development due to the collaborative and investigational nature of the activities. Very effective leadership and good subject management are reflected in the very good achievement of pupils during their time in school. Science is a central part of the current school improvement planning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective teaching and the valuable support provided by the ICT technician enable pupils to achieve very well.
- Pupils benefit from a well-planned programme of work.
- Very good resourcing has a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement.
- The subject is led and managed very effectively.
- The use of ICT to support learning in mathematics and science is not sufficiently systematic.

Commentary

- 72 Throughout the school, pupils achieve very well in relation to their capabilities and prior attainment. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are above average for the pupils' age and similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. The curriculum for ICT is well-planned and provides pupils with appropriately challenging activities in most aspects of the subject. Although ICT is used increasingly effectively to support work in other subjects it is not yet used sufficiently systematically in mathematics and science.
- 73 The quality of teaching is generally very good and contributes significantly to pupils' very good achievement. Very well planned and organised lessons challenge and extend pupils at all levels of attainment, capturing their interest and attention, and stimulating a strong desire to learn. The expertise of the support technician is particularly beneficial. In addition to co-operating with class teachers to provide a good level of support for pupils, his ability to address problems quickly means that time is not lost unnecessarily when technical difficulties arise.
- 74 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make particularly good progress in the communication and handling elements of the subject. They use the keyboard and mouse confidently to produce text and to access various tools. Higher attainers are able to shift text, using cut and paste techniques, and to incorporate illustrations to complement text. Pupils extend their skills in handling information, using ICT generated graphs to represent the findings of class surveys, for example.
- 75 Older pupils build effectively on this good start. Their ability to use ICT information in different forms and styles to meet particular requirements is a strong feature in the pupils' work by the end of their time in the school. They adjust size, style, shape and colour of text confidently, and use illustrations and sound to enhance their presentations. They demonstrate well developed skills in finding, using and sharing

information. A particularly good feature in the provision is the emphasis placed on requiring pupils to frame questions before they go to the computer, so that their time on the computer is used effectively. Pupils show good awareness of modern communication systems, communicating with other schools by e-mail, for example, as well as using the computer bar-code system in the library and accessing the school's own web-site for particular purposes. They know how to use spreadsheets, using formulae appropriately to change variables, and show a good understanding of control technology, entering information accurately to control a screen image. They use the same principles to programme a floor robot to negotiate a specific course, and appreciate the importance of being precise when framing and sequencing instructions.

- 76 All aspects of ICT are accessible to all pupils, and teachers and support staff take good care to check that boys and girls enjoy the same opportunities. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very carefully and make very good progress. Work in ICT is led and managed very effectively by the subject co-ordinators. The computer suite and very good resources have a very positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement. The ability to give pupils direct access to computers and other ICT facilities, such as digital cameras, helps to capture pupils' interest, challenge their thinking and extend their learning in the subject.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

- 77 There are good examples of the effective use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning in other subjects, such as the use of interactive whiteboards to introduce lessons. However, the use of ICT to support learning in other subjects, particularly science and mathematics, has not been fully established throughout the school. There is scope for a more systematic approach to identifying opportunities for the consistent use of ICT as an integral part of planning in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Due to the timing of the inspection and the school's timetabling arrangements, insufficient lessons were observed to make an overall judgement about provision in geography. No lessons were seen in Years 1 and 2, but work completed previously indicates that pupils follow a relevant programme of study, and that pupils' work makes a significant contribution towards the development of their literacy skills as well as their basic geographical awareness. No lessons were seen in Years 3 to 5 but work in pupils' books and on display show that they achieve well in developing their geographical skills and knowledge. Evidence from two lessons observed in Year 6 indicates that, by the age of 11, standards in geography are above those expected nationally due to high quality teaching that makes rigorous demands on pupils and promotes rapid advances in their geographical learning.

Visits to relevant destinations, such as Grasmere and Winmarleigh Hall, make a significant contribution to the good achievement of pupils, and enable them to recognise similarities and differences between their own locality and the contrasting areas they visit. The subject is well led and managed and makes a good contribution to the development of the pupils' literacy skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The work examined indicated some inconsistencies in the use of ICT to support learning in the subject.

History

Due to the timing of the inspection, no history lessons were observed during the inspection so it is not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in history. However, the work in pupils' books and on display in school indicates that pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2, where standards are similar to those expected for the pupils' age. The work of older pupils indicates that pupils achieve very well in developing their historical skills and knowledge, and by the end of Year 6, standards in history are above those expected for the age of the pupils. Although no secure judgement can be made about history teaching, the pupils' work indicates that teaching is good and particularly effective in Year 6.

The school's programme of day and residential visits is a very good feature of history provision. Visits to relevant destinations, such as York and Tatton Park, are very effective in providing opportunities for pupils to explore primary and secondary sources of information about the past, and in stimulating high levels of interest in the subject. This was apparent in the work produced by Year 3, following their visit to York in support of their Viking studies and in the very high quality of work produced by Year 6, after a visit to Liverpool museum during their World War II studies.

The subject is well led and managed and the planned curriculum meets requirements for history. In accordance with the school policy for history, the subject makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills, in both written and oral communication about their learning. Due to the rich nature of the history curriculum and the interesting way in which it is taught, the subject makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**, which represents good improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range and quality of pupils' drawings are outstanding.
- Very good teaching is enhanced by the skills of an artist in residence.
- The quality of resources is very good.
- There are very good links with other subjects.

Commentary

- 78 Pupils achieve highly throughout the school, and attain standards that are well above average for their age at seven and eleven. The use of pastels to produce atmospheric pictures is outstanding. The expertise of the staff and very good individual guidance enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to achieve very well.
- 79 Teaching is very good overall from Year 1 to Year 6, and so pupils learn well. Teachers demonstrate techniques such as printing and the use of charcoal very effectively, resulting in a significant improvement in pupils' skills. In a very good lesson in Year 2 for example, the teacher asked the pupils to look carefully at two contrasting seascapes by the famous artist, Turner, and demonstrated how similar effects might be achieved with pastels and charcoal. The enthusiasm and passion of the teacher lifted the quality of pupils' discussion so that they described what it might have been like to be in the stormy or calm sea. This discussion about moods and feelings and the modelling of skills helped pupils to produce impressive pictures of outstanding quality. Teaching is enhanced by the regular contribution of an artist in residence. Working with small groups of pupils, the artist imparted his considerable expertise to help pupils to produce very good impressionist paintings.
- 80 A very good feature in the provision, is the way the curriculum is planned to link art with other subjects. This gives pupils a greater knowledge of their subject and improves the quality of their work. This is particularly evident in the clay pots produced as part of the Viking topic in Year 3 and the exceptional quality of pictures produced by pupils in Year 6, relating to their studies of World War II in history.
- 81 The subject is led and managed successfully, and the work on display shows very good progression through the school. Resources of high quality contribute to the high standards achieved. The study of famous artists, discussions about emotions and the spiritual quality of some pupils' work make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **good** with many very strong features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good curriculum includes all aspects of the designing and making process.
- Pupils co-operate well.

Commentary

- 82 Pupils attain standards that are above those expected for their age in Year 2 and Year 6. The good level of support and the interesting and relevant activities help all pupils, including those with special educational needs to achieve well.
- 83 The work produced by pupils in Year 1 and Year 2, reflects the good teaching which they receive. Teaching is also good in Year 3 to Year 6, enabling pupils to achieve well. A particularly strong feature in the provision, is the way in which teachers plan a series of lessons on a topic so that pupils experience all aspects of the designing and making process. This was evident in a Year 6 lesson, for example, where pupils had looked at different types of puppets and mechanisms before designing and making their own. In a well conducted review and evaluation session at the end of the topic, pupils were encouraged to look at their work critically to identify possible improvements. One pupil, for example, realised that she had not measured the material accurately enough.
- 84 Pupils also benefit from opportunities to engage in role-play activities related to aspects of their work in the subject. These enable them to improve their skills in working with others and in taking specific roles such as marketing or production managers in joint projects. Such activities contribute significantly to the pupils' personal and social development and extend their understanding of the real world. The subject is led and managed effectively, achieving a consistency in the development of pupils' skills during their time in the school. It makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills through careful labelling and writing instructions, for example, and to their numeracy skills, through measuring and weighing materials, as part of their work on certain projects.

Music

Due to the timing of the inspection and the school's timetabling arrangement, insufficient lessons were observed to make an overall judgement of provision in the subject. However, the examination of available evidence indicates that all curricular requirements are met, and that there are some particularly good features in the provision. The unaccompanied singing during a whole school assembly, for example, was of good quality, reflecting very effective teaching. Another strength of the music provision is the very good contribution made by the local authority music service. The specialist music teacher uses her considerable expertise to work alongside teachers in turn to develop their confidence and improve the quality of pupils' learning. This was particularly noticeable in a lesson observed in Year 2, where she taught the pupils to play simple *Blues* on keyboards. Her skilful teaching and enthusiastic approach contributed significantly to the pupils' high achievement during the lesson. Varied and worthwhile extra-curricular opportunities enrich and enhance the provision in music. Pupils have many opportunities to perform for an audience, and the experience is enhanced by the arrangements to hire a theatre for some of the productions. In addition, having auditioned successfully, the school choir is currently preparing to perform with The Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Physical Education

The provision for physical education is **good**, with very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in relation to their capabilities.
- Teaching is generally good and sometimes very good.
- Very good opportunities are created for pupils to take part in sport outside the school day.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities.
- In a minority of lessons, insufficient attention is given to helping pupils to improve their performance further.

Commentary

- 85 Pupils achieve well in relation to their capabilities. Most achieve at least appropriate standards for their age and a significant proportion achieve higher standards. In swimming, nearly all pupils learn to swim at least 25 metres unaided by the end of their time in the school and some achieve considerably higher standards. All pupils, regardless of gender, ability and race are strongly encouraged and supported very effectively. The programme of work meets fully the National Curriculum requirements. Good use is made of external expertise to enhance provision, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered, including opportunities for pupils to compete against local schools.
- 86 In the lessons observed, pupils wore appropriate kit and were aware of safety requirements. In most lessons, pupils engage in challenging activities, and their progress is helped by good demonstration and guidance by teachers. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own performance and that of others in order to improve. In a minority of lessons, insufficient attention is given to coaching and helping some of the pupils to improve.
- 87 The subject is led and managed very effectively by a physical education specialist who has a very good understanding of the strengths and priorities for development in the subject. On-site facilities are limited, but the school makes full use of the space available including the multi-purpose school hall. The pupils display positive attitudes to the subject and acquire knowledge and skills in a planned and organised way. Many show a good understanding of fitness and health and appreciate the importance of practice in order to improve their performance.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Although only a limited amount of direct teaching was observed in these areas, the scrutiny of curriculum planning and school documentation, examination of pupils' previous work and discussions with pupils, staff and parents, indicate that the school makes high quality provision for these aspects. A very good programme for the development of pupils' personal, social and health education is well organised and co-ordinated. It addresses effectively the pupils' sex education and relationships, and includes discrete lessons on citizenship, nutrition, personal hygiene and the dangers associated with smoking, alcohol and drug misuse. The high quality provision for extra-curricular activities, including an extensive programme of educational and residential visits, valuable contributions by visiting speakers, and the wide range of extra-curricular activities, contributes significantly to pupils' all-round development. The school council provides pupils with a growing insight into how democracy works, and contributes to their maturity and increasing sense of responsibility. Fund raising for various charities, including those to assist people in other countries, helps pupils to develop caring attitudes and an awareness of what it means to be a world citizen.

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	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	3
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
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	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3*
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1
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	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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

The combined grade for accommodation and resources is made up of:

- resources: 2
- accommodation: 4