

INSPECTION REPORT

ST OSWALD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ashton-in-Makerfield

LEA Area: Wigan

Unique Reference Number: 106488

Head teacher: Mrs P Carter

Lead inspector: Mr D Byrne

Dates of inspection: 24th - 27th January 2005

Inspection number: 267912

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 297

School address: Council Avenue
Ashton-in-Makerfield
Wigan
Lancashire
Postcode: WN9 9AZ

Telephone number: 01942 724820
Fax number: 01942 726874

Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of Mr K Stout
governors:

Date of previous 14th December 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a voluntary aided Catholic school within the Liverpool Archdiocese. It is situated in an urban locality near the centre of Ashton-in-Makerfield in the local authority of Wigan. Two hundred and ninety seven boys and girls are educated in classes from reception to Year 6. All pupils are of white British background. No pupil requires support for English as an additional language. Even though the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (4.1%) is below the national average, inspection evidence indicates that pupils come from a broadly average range of backgrounds. A very small number of pupils are in public care. The attainment of most children when they start school is broadly in line with the attainment expected for their age. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (8.5%) is below the national average. Four pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need which is average for primary schools nationally. The school population is very stable with average levels of movement in and out of the school. In 2001, the school accepted an invitation to become a Beacon school. It has gained three School Achievement Awards in 2000, 2001 and 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
28076	Mr D Byrne	Lead inspector	Science, design and technology, information and communication technology.
267912	Mr S Hussain	Lay inspector	
12997	Ms C Cheong	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum, English, art and design, music, special educational needs.
17543	Mr R Coupe	Team inspector	Mathematics, geography, history, physical education, personal, social and health education and citizenship.

The inspection contractor was:

ALTECQ Inspections Ltd
102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
Gloucester
GL53 7JX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet 'Complaining about Ofsted Inspections', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	9
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	12
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	17
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	20
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	34

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school providing a very high quality of education. The excellent leadership of the headteacher, supported by a very effective staff team and governing body, ensures that pupils reach very high standards. Teaching is very good and so pupils achieve very well and develop very good attitudes, behave very well and form very good relationships with others. The school's very good level of support for pupils develops thoughtful, mature individuals. As a result, the school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, very effectively supported by key staff, creates an excellent ethos that results in pupils developing very good levels of self-esteem and showing very high levels of care and consideration for others.
- Very good provision in the Foundation Stage gives children a very good start to their education.
- High quality teaching ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils, achieve very well and reach very good standards overall in Years 1-6.
- Pupils' ideas are valued and the school has very innovative and effective systems for involving them in evaluating how well they are doing and where they can do even better.
- Pupils benefit from a rich and stimulating curriculum that is enhanced by a wide range of very well thought through activities to make lessons relevant to the pupils' lives.
- Very good levels of support and guidance provide pupils with a secure and safe place in which to learn.
- The partnerships with parents, other schools and the community are extremely influential in the pupils' education.
- While pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good, they have only a limited knowledge and understanding of people from other cultures.
- The governing body makes sure that the school gets the best from its budget, but the uncertainty over the future of the school's site has resulted in a lack of investment in the accommodation in recent years, some parts of which are currently unsatisfactory.

The school has improved very well since the last inspection. It has worked hard to very successfully improve the provision for children in the Foundation Stage and standards have risen at the end of Years 2 and 6. The level of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is better, in particular with regard to pupils' moral development. Many successful innovations have improved the curriculum and increased the relevance of the pupils' lessons, although more still needs to be done

to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the multicultural nature of Britain. The quality of the school's self-evaluation and the involvement of pupils in evaluating their own learning have improved significantly and are now considerable strengths of the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 6 results

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

Key: A* - very high; 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 **very well**. Children enter school with skills and knowledge that are broadly average. They achieve very well overall in the reception classes because of very good teaching. They achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. The majority of children exceed the standards expected for their age by the time they complete the reception class. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve very well. By the end of Year 2, standards are well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. In the 2004 national tests, standards were in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally and in comparison with similar schools. Standards are also above average at the end of Year 2 in information and communication technology, geography and history. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to do very well and by the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science and achievement in each subject is very good. In 2004, standards in mathematics were in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally. The high standards in English, mathematics and science have been consistently maintained for the last four years. In other subjects, standards by the end of Year 6 are above average in information and communication technology, geography, history and music. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and of higher-attaining pupils is very good across the school.

Pupils have **very good** levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall. The moral development of pupils is excellent and is a key factor in the very good behaviour throughout the school and the very good attitudes and relationships. Cultural development is satisfactory. The good rates of attendance and very good levels of punctuality demonstrate that pupils like coming to school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. The quality of teaching and learning is **very good** with some excellent features. Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good quality teaching for pupils with special educational needs and for higher-attaining pupils. Very good assessment procedures are established that successfully inform teachers' planning. The curriculum is very good with very good enrichment. The accommodation has some weaknesses and is unsatisfactory overall, but

resources are satisfactory. Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good and there is very good support, advice and guidance for pupils who are very much involved in the running of the school. Very good partnerships exist with parents, the community and other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good** overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and provides a very clear vision for the school's future. The leadership of key staff is very good and very effective in their contribution to the school's development. Management is very effective, including financial control. Very good governance provides valuable support whilst monitoring closely the impact of decisions on the pupils' education. The governing body ensures that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of the school. They are full of praise for the caring and supportive nature of the school, for the high quality of teaching and learning and for the high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes. They rate highly the way the school works with them and hold the headteacher and staff in high regard. Pupils feel very involved in the school and enjoy the education it provides. Pupils feel that their views are valued and that teachers do all that they can to help and support their personal and academic development.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of the diverse range of cultures that make up modern Britain.
- To improve the quality of the accommodation and create vibrant and stimulating learning areas for pupils in the playground.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Pupils' achievement is **very good** across the school. Standards are currently well **above average** in English, mathematics and science at the end of both Years 2 and 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well overall in the Foundation Stage and this continues in Years 1 to 6.
- For many years the school has sustained very good standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of geography and history, and they make good use of numeracy and information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils achieve very well.

Commentary

Foundation Stage

- 1 Achievement is very good overall for the children in the reception classes. Children start school with generally average standards. By the time they move to Year 1 the vast majority of children will attain the standard expected in all of the goals that they are expected to attain by the end of the reception year. A majority exceed expectations in the key areas of personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; and mathematical development.

Key Stage 1

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	19.4 (18.5)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	18.5 (17.2)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	19.3 (18.1)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 42 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- 2 Inspection evidence shows that pupils achieve very well overall in Years 1 and 2. At the end of Year 2, standards are currently well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The quality of pupils' presentation of work is of a high standard and pupils mostly apply their skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology well in other subjects of the curriculum. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have been well

above average in recent years and have improved at a faster rate than the average for all schools nationally. In 2004, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally and when compared with the results of similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good quality day-to-day support as a result of effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants and achieve very well in relation to the targets in their individual education plans. Improvements in planning in recent years have resulted in higher-attaining pupils being suitably challenged so that they too achieve very well.

- 3 In the other subjects inspected, pupils achieve well in information and communication technology, geography, history and music. There is no statistically significant and reliable data to show a difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

Key Stage 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.8 (30.1)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	30.3 (29.1)	27.0 (26.8)
science	31.4 (30.5)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 45 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- 4 High standards have been maintained since the last inspection. When the results gained by Year 6 pupils in the 2004 national tests are compared with similar schools on the basis of prior attainment when in Year 2, it shows that in 2004, pupils achieved very well in mathematics and science and well in English. This reflects a strong picture of test achievement in the previous four years. In the 2004 national tests, pupils' performance was well above the national average in English and science whilst in mathematics standards were very high being in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally. Inspection evidence shows that standards are currently well above average in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, pupils achieve well in information and communication technology, geography, history and music. There is no statistically significant and reliable data to show a difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
- 5 The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils is very good overall. They achieve as well as their peers. This is a result of the very good help and adjustments to the curriculum that are made for them by teaching and support staff to suit their particular needs. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning very well by helping them to remain focused on the given tasks and therefore gain success.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**, promoting amongst pupils **very good** attitudes and behaviour and **very good** levels of personal development. Attendance is **good** and punctuality **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An excellent ethos within the school promotes amongst pupils very good attitudes, behaviour and levels of personal development.
- The high quality of relationships throughout the school is a direct result of the dedication and care of staff.
- Pupils are very happy to come to school and this reflects in good attendance.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the multicultural society of modern Britain is weak.

Commentary

- 6 Pupils have very well developed levels of care and consideration for others. Teachers and support staff work together closely to provide a very supportive and secure atmosphere within school. They treat pupils fairly and take time to listen to their opinions and views. This results in pupils feeling valued and fully included in all that goes on. Pupils develop very close bonds with others and look out for one another both in and out of the classroom. Older pupils regularly sit with younger ones at playtimes and help them to play simple games and throughout the school pupils are willing to help others.

Example of outstanding practice

The pupils' very good academic success and levels of personal development are a direct result of the excellent ethos of the school.

From the moment the children start school, they are immersed in an environment of care. Pupils learn not to prejudge others and consequently there are very high levels of respect in all aspects of the relationships that they form. There is never any squabbling between pupils about who should use the computer, no evidence of anyone trying to pressurise others into doing things their way, just respect, tolerance and compassion. The consistent way the school does things, and the very high expectations of the headteacher in particular, mean that there is a calmness that pervades the school. Pupils show high levels of self-discipline and seem determined not to let themselves down or their friends. Pupils are able to thrive in exploring their own ideas as they develop their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.

- 7 Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and they behave very well overall. The school instils in pupils a desire to work hard and achieve as well as they can. Pupils respond very well to the highly organised lessons and the clarity of expectation made by teachers by eagerly learning. Pupils are very successfully encouraged to develop a very good understanding of right and wrong and of moral issues. Very good social skills are developed throughout the school. The very good curriculum develops in pupils a very good awareness of the beauty of nature and a sense of the small part each of us plays in protecting the world from damage. Whilst pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of the features of their own culture, their knowledge and understanding of the multicultural society of modern Britain is weak. There is no evidence of any racist attitudes amongst pupils, but discussions with them show that they have

a limited knowledge and understanding of the customs and beliefs of people from other cultures.

- 8 Standards of attendance and punctuality are very similar to the last inspection. Pupils value the certificates given for good and improving attendance. The school works effectively with the educational welfare service to support families when there are difficulties. First day of absence telephone calls home ensure that there is no unexplained absence.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.7	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good** overall. A **very good** curriculum with a **very good** range of additional activities enriches the pupils' education. Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. The school provides **very good** support, advice and guidance and has **very good** procedures for seeking the views of pupils. **Very good** partnerships exist with parents and there are **very good** links with the community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good** overall, supported by **very good** assessment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Throughout the school, teachers set very high expectations for pupils in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.
- Very good teamwork between teaching assistants and class teachers is a very important feature of the very good support provided for children in the reception class and for pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils.
- Pupils respond very well to being expected to evaluate how well they are achieving by working very hard, learning very well and setting themselves very high standards.
- Assessment is an integral part of the way that teachers plan and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
-----------	-----------	------	--------------	----------------	------	-----------

4 (11)	17 (47)	10 (28)	5 (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.

- 9 The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Teachers continue to give very good focus to the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology but have also extended the range of methods that they use and developed very good strategies to involve pupils more in their own learning. Throughout the school, all teaching staff and teaching assistants are very hard working, very caring and totally committed to giving that little bit extra to enhance the pupils' education. This is exemplified by the effort that goes into the creation of some very high quality classroom displays, which successfully reinforce the pupils' good work as well as providing a bright, lively and informative environment in which to learn.
- 10 The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is very good with particular strengths in the expectations set for children's personal, social and emotional development, in their communication, language and literacy development and in their mathematical development. In Years 1 to 6, lessons are very well planned and very effectively organised and managed so that the needs of all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils are very effectively met. Pupils respect their teachers and respond very well to high expectations for them to work hard and do their best. This very good work ethic pervades classes and contributes to the way that pupils concentrate on their work and constantly strive to improve and do even better. High levels of trust exist between pupils and teachers and this enables pupils to accept the very good advice that teachers provide through discussion and marked work designed to raise their performance to very high levels. Very good partnerships between teachers and pupils very successfully involves pupils in making objective evaluations of how much they have learnt in each lesson as well as how much progress they make over time. This very simple but effective system for pupils' self-evaluation is a very significant feature of teaching and contributes to the effectiveness of pupils' learning.
- 11 The subject knowledge of teachers is very good overall. This enables challenging tasks and activities to be given to pupils and for very clear explanations to guide and direct them. Every lesson has a clear purpose that is shared with pupils. Teachers ask searching questions of pupils to make sure that pupils understand and they use resources wisely to bring lessons alive. Teachers value pupils' own ideas and thoughts which results in pupils feeling valued. As a result, pupils develop very good levels of self-esteem which gives them the confidence to think and act on their own in order to solve problems in subjects such as mathematics and science. There is particular expertise in the teaching of literacy and numeracy and some very good examples of teaching in science and information and communication technology. Increasingly teachers are linking subjects together so that pupils see the relevance of what they are learning and make sense of many of their basic skills. Some very effective use is made of interactive whiteboards to add interest and focus to lessons. Teaching assistants work very well with teachers to support identified groups of

pupils, mostly with special educational needs, but also higher-attaining pupils. They are very sensitive to the needs of pupils and are very instrumental in the very good achievement of pupils with special educational needs.

- 12 Very effective, well-established systems exist for assessing children when they start school and for tracking the achievement of pupils as they move across it. The information gathered from the combination of teachers' assessments and objective tests is very effectively processed so that teachers are able to set work at just the right level. This results in pupils responding enthusiastically to lessons and wanting to learn. Good systems are employed to identify what pupils already know prior to an area of study and the resulting information is effectively used to guide planning so that pupils do not repeat work that they already know. Careful analysis of assessment data enables very good provision to be made for gifted and talented pupils and ensures that the changing needs of pupils with special educational needs are identified and planned for.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good** with **very good** enrichment. The accommodation and resources are **unsatisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good curriculum in English, mathematics and science underpins the very good achievement overall.
- Effective links are being made between subjects in Years 1 to 6 and these positively impact on pupils' learning and their levels of motivation.
- The curriculum is very well adapted for pupils with special educational needs.
- The curriculum for Foundation Stage is well planned and balanced.
- The school makes very good provision for enriching learning through a very good range of educational visits and visitors
- Unsatisfactory features to the accommodation limit some pupils' learning.

Commentary

- 13 Pupils benefit from a lively and exciting curriculum that inspires very good levels of learning and achievement. The school is very successful in ensuring that all pupils are very well included in all elements of each subject. Significant improvements have been made to the Foundation Stage curriculum since the last inspection. It is now very good overall with a notable strength in the provision for developing children's personal, social and emotional development, their communication, language and literacy and their mathematical understanding. In Years 1 to 6, the provision in each subject is carefully planned so that as pupils move through the school, they make very good progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Some good innovations have been introduced by the headteacher, supported by the staff. These have included good adaptations being made to the national strategies for literacy and numeracy so that pupils increasingly apply their writing, reading and numeracy skills to other subjects. Recent improvements in the provision for information

and communication technology have boosted pupils' learning and they are now making good use of computers to support learning across the curriculum. The school has made a good start in linking all subjects together so that pupils have the chance to use their knowledge and skills in a variety of situations. Innovative timetabling for some subjects that includes blocking half days in which everyone is immersed in one subject for a concentrated amount of time enables pupils to improve their depth of knowledge of some subjects, such as science and design and technology.

- 14 Very good provision for pupils with special educational needs makes sure that they are totally involved in all aspects of the school curriculum. Each pupil has a detailed individual education plan that is used to guide learning and used by staff to gauge the pupils' progress. Higher-attaining pupils benefit from some innovative strategies to extend their existing skills and knowledge. For example, some pupils in Year 4 participate in the World Class mathematics tests through links with the local secondary school. Very good provision is made for the development of pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship with some particularly imaginative approaches to developing pupils' citizenship.
- 15 The school makes very good provision for enriching the basic curriculum. This includes making very good use of the local community, educational visits and visitors to school. Inputs from authors and visiting musicians broaden pupils' artistic and creative skills and good links with local sports clubs extends pupils' skills and levels of participation in sports such as rugby league. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities that include a good range of sporting and musical activities and, for older pupils, the opportunity to apply their information and communication technology skills in designing a school newspaper.
- 16 As a result of many years of uncertainty, caused by the possibility of relocation, the school has been held back by the governors' limited scope to develop and improve the accommodation. Despite the best efforts of diligent and conscientious caretaking and cleaning staff, and the very effective use by staff of what is available, the accommodation has not been improved sufficiently and is currently unsatisfactory. There are not enough teaching bases for the number of classes in the school and many rooms are very small. The accommodation for children in the Foundation Stage is unsuitable for children of their age because it lacks the space for the creation of lively and stimulating learning areas. Outdoors, the quality of the playground is rather barren and lacks inspiration and imagination for pupils at play. The range of learning resources is satisfactory overall and enables all parts of the National Curriculum to be taught.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **very good**. The school provides **very good** support, advice and guidance and has **very good** procedures for seeking the views of pupils.

- Children are introduced to school life very well.
- Very good relationships between pupils and adults contribute to the family ethos.
- Members of staff work very effectively with the community to support and guide pupils.
- Pupils feel valued because their views are taken seriously.

Commentary

- 17 The high standards of care noted at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and procedures for involving pupils in the running of the school and in evaluating how well they are doing have been improved. There is a very good induction program to settle new children into the school's learning routines. Very positive links with pre-school groups and very good information to parents support induction. New children can join assembly and mix with their future classmates at very well organized pre-school sessions. Pupils transferring from other schools also settle in very easily as a result of the very good arrangements made for them; for instance, they are allocated a 'buddy'.
- 18 Arrangements for child protection are effective. The designated officer is very experienced. Several staff are due to receive extensive training as soon as the Local Authority can accommodate this. The school has good arrangements to support pupils in public care. General health and safety risk assessments are undertaken as required. Arrangements for first aid and fire procedures are good. Several members of the community help to promote health and safety. For instance, older pupils can take part in the 'crucial crew' initiative (dealing with emergencies) and safe cycling training is offered during the summer holidays. The school has largely maintained these areas of its work since the last inspection.
- 19 Members of staff know pupils well and give very good support, advice and guidance to all pupils. Pupils' records contain much information about their academic and personal development and these are used very well to monitor progress. Target-setting and review are very strong features. Outside agencies are very well involved in supporting learning. For instance, specialist music teachers attend the school regularly. Support for special educational needs is also provided, for example, a specialist teacher works with pupils in school each week. This illustrates the school's inclusive approach to learning. The school has made good improvement to provision for special educational needs and very good improvement to personal support since the last inspection.
- 20 There is a very strong family ethos at this school and very trusting relationships between pupils and staff. This gives pupils confidence in raising any concerns or worries they may have, for instance, about bullying. The school issues questionnaires to pupils regularly to seek their views. The school council provides very good chances for pupils to develop citizenship skills. Pupils learn very well about democracy and decision-making as they discuss issues of concern. It is pleasing to see how many positive changes have arisen through the council, for instance, regarding the ethos in the classroom, playground safety and the establishment of 'playground rangers'.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with parents, other schools and the wider community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive very good information about the school and their children's standards, achievement and targets for improvement.
- Parents make a very good contribution to the school and to their children's learning.
- Very good links with the community enrich the curriculum.
- Very good links with the secondary school provide additional learning chances for pupils and prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.

Commentary

- 21 Links with parents and the community have improved since the last inspection. The school welcomes parents as partners in the education of their children. The new headteacher and staff are very approachable and they are always pleased to discuss any concerns. A questionnaire is sent to parents regularly and this helps to identify issues and enables parents to influence the school. The school has recently made changes to its homework policy and provides workshops for parents, following parents' suggestions.
- 22 Parents are very well informed about the school through a detailed prospectus. Weekly newsletters provide much additional information about forthcoming events and dates to remember. Parents are also given very good advice about how they can help with their children's learning through regular workshops in reading, spelling, mathematics and religious education. Arrangements for consultation are very good; there are three meetings between staff, parents and pupils each school year to discuss their children's work. These are supported by well prepared and accurate written reports that link in with individual targets for improvement.
- 23 Parents are very supportive of the school. For instance, attendance at school events is very good and they are generous regarding fundraising for charities and good causes. Many parent helpers give much of their time to the school. For instance, they listen to readers, accompany swimming and help with after school activities. Parents support their children's learning at home very well by listening to reading and with homework. These factors support learning very well.
- 24 Links with sports clubs enable pupils to receive rugby and athletics coaching regularly. A local football club is very well involved in coaching and its staff also make a significant contribution to personal education through its anti-racism project. The Local Authority regularly provides additional experiences in music, including dance and instrument tuition. A local author frequently works with pupils in school, providing many additional learning chances in literacy and art

and design. A very good link with a local arts centre supports teaching and learning through loans of artefacts. Pupils enjoy many school trips that enrich the curriculum. For instance, Year 2 recently went to Manchester Science Museum to see an exhibition about the Titanic and Year 3 to Bolton Museum to see one about ancient Egypt.

- 25 Developmental work and staff liaison with many schools in Wigan, resulting from the time that the school had Beacon Status, has led to very strong and lasting links. Very good links with St Edmond Arrowsmith High School make transition into Year 7 easier. In addition to transition projects, pupils also receive regular teaching in advanced mathematics and French. It is very pleasing to find that many of the older pupils from the secondary school frequently help in the playground and listen to readers at lunchtime.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **very good** overall. The headteacher provides **excellent** leadership and is **very effectively** supported by key staff. The impact of the governance of the school is **very good**. Management is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and is very dedicated to providing the very best education possible for all pupils.
- There are effective and manageable self-evaluation systems established that include everyone involved in the school.
- The school is very well managed with clear areas of responsibility for all staff and regular and constructive reviews of everyone's effectiveness coupled with very good quality staff development.
- Very good governance ensures that the school is constantly seeking ways of improving whilst maintaining a balanced budget

Commentary

Example of outstanding practice

The school is what it is because of the dedication, care and professionalism of the headteacher
--

She has a very clear vision for the school's direction that is rooted in seeking the best for the pupils. There is no sense of complacency and every effort is made to consider the views of everyone connected with the school. Decisions are made after careful consideration and rigorous evaluations of all available data. New initiatives are always welcomed, but the head teacher has the wisdom and strength to avoid getting involved in any innovation until its value has been evaluated. All staff are very well supported and valued and the very good relationships that exist across the school enable teachers, teaching assistants and other staff to be totally involved in working towards a shared purpose. The headteacher maintains an excellent ethos that values not only academic achievement but also the personal development and self-esteem of pupils. The highest of standards are expected, and the headteacher makes sure that everyone is aware of this. She knows every pupil in the school. She is everywhere; helping teachers, supporting pupils, checking on the playground and meeting with

parents. She is approachable and very welcoming and shows respect for everyone, always seeking to bring out their best. Reasoned criticism is listened to and constructive advice is readily accepted and this contributes to the school constantly reinventing itself and evolving to meet the changing needs of the pupils. The headteacher maintains a very good overview of all that goes on in the school, and beyond, and her energy levels and infectious dedication to the care of pupils and staff, generates respect from everyone.

- 26 The quality of leadership and management has remained very good and as impressive as it was at the time of the last inspection. Despite the recent changes in the headteacher and senior management team, the school continues to move forward at a very good pace, constantly seeking ways of doing even better. The headteacher is meticulous in all that she does and builds very strong relationships with pupils, staff, parents and governors. High aspirations drive the actions of the headteacher and nothing is considered too good for her staff and pupils. This is exemplified by the excellent techniques that are employed to make sure that the best possible staff are selected and appointed, even for temporary posts. The headteacher has very clear aims and knows exactly what she wants and how to get there.
- 27 The school is very well aware of its strengths and weaknesses. It has very well-established systems for school self-evaluation. Very good support for subject leaders by the headteacher and senior staff enables regular and systematic evaluations of the effectiveness of the school's provision in all subjects and aspects. Subject management is very good overall and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and for children in the Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. The information used from all evaluations, coupled with rigorous and intelligent analyses of assessment data, contribute to a well-thought through and highly relevant school improvement planning process. Performance management is at the heart of all that the school does and makes vital contributions to staff development, subject and departmental management, allocation of resources and to short, medium and long-term targets for school improvement. Very clear delegation of responsibilities to staff, coupled with systematic and rigorous evaluations by the headteacher and senior staff of the effectiveness of staff, ensure that very high levels of achievement are maintained. The school welcomes the involvement of external, independent advisers such as local authority personnel, to assist in some aspects of the school's monitoring activities, thereby adding a vital touch of objectivity.
- 28 The school makes very good use of its finances and carefully and very effectively monitors the impact of spending on the quality of the pupils' education. For instance, over the last few years, the school has opted to maintain a non-teaching deputy headteacher. This has had a very strong impact on the quality of the school's management by enabling very effective delegation of many management duties to be very effective in impacting on the pupils' education. It has wisely put money into additional support for gifted and talented pupils and has spent heavily in recent years to successfully raise the profile of information and communication technology. The school has also invested considerably in staff development to make sure that the staff team are as effective as they can be. Teaching assistants are wisely deployed to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and decisions to teach

pupils set by ability in Years 5 and 6 are having a very positive impact on achievement. Despite weaknesses in parts of the accommodation, the school makes very good use of all parts of the building.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	743 103	Balance from previous year	117 102
Total expenditure	749 327	Balance carried forward to the next	110 878
Expenditure per pupil	2 510		

- 29 The school's governors do a very good job. The governing body makes sure that all of its statutory duties are met. A large surplus has been accrued in recent years, in anticipation of the possible relocation of the school site, but this is reducing as the school releases funds now that the school is to remain where it is. Significant funds have been released to improve the accommodation and the high surplus shown above is set to fall considerably in the current financial year and beyond. Governors carefully monitor standards in the school and, whilst being very supportive, also monitor the validity of the headteacher's decisions. An effective committee structure enables governors to fulfil all of their statutory duties and frequent visits by many governors help to keep them informed about what goes on. The pressures on a headteacher are recognised by governors and the decision to employ a bursar and to use the local education authority clerking system has proved to be wise.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

- 30 The quality of provision has improved very significantly since the last inspection when the curriculum was found to be unsatisfactory. It is now very good. The attainment of most children when they start school is broadly in line with the attainment expected for their age. Children make a very effective start to their school careers in the two reception classes. They achieve very well over the year starting in line with national averages and finishing well above with the teaching of Literacy, mathematical development and personal and social skills being given a very high priority by all staff. Progress is very good.
- 31 There is a very strong drive for learning in the Foundation Stage. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Children of all abilities achieve very well because of the very good teaching that they receive and because the curriculum provided is very good and very well planned. Very good assessment procedures and practice take place. The results of assessments are used very well to plan for particular groups and individual children. Consequently, when they start Year 1, the vast majority of children will have achieved all of the Early Learning Goals, the targets for children nationally for the end of their reception year. Over half of the children will have exceeded this level, especially in the core areas of language development, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development. The only area of comparative weakness is the provision for creative development, which is satisfactory overall. Leadership and management are very good.
- 32 The accommodation for the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory. While staff make very good use of available spaces and compensate for small classroom sizes by greater use of the school hall for physical and creative development, the space available is unsatisfactory. Staff provided little in the way of extra activities for five-year-olds to play with at whole school play times.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships are established that create a happy, work centred atmosphere.
- Children achieve very well because of the high expectation and priority that staff give to this area of learning.
- Behaviour is very good.

Commentary

- 33 This area of learning has a high profile and children achieve very well. As a consequence, by the time they finish the year the vast majority will have attained the expected level and a majority of children will have exceeded it. This is due to very good teaching, based on very good relationships, orderly routines and the work-centred atmosphere that the staff promote. Behaviour is very good because staff are highly skilled in teaching children to understand right from wrong and behaviour management is consistent and very good. Whole-class teaching times are used very well to promote personal and social development, teaching children how to listen and respect each others ideas. Less structured time provides some very good opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves and co-operate with others.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very good emphasis on children's acquisition of language skills across all areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers provide very good models for the basic skills of speaking, reading and writing.
- Assessment is very thorough and used very well to group children and target work appropriately.

Commentary

- 34 Children make very good progress and achieve very well. Standards by the time children move to Year 1 are well above average, with children achieving the expected levels and a majority exceeding them. This is because of the very good quality of the teaching they receive and the good amount of time and attention that the school gives to this area, which they see as a priority. Staff use every opportunity to develop language and children are encouraged to listen to one another. This happens both in the classroom and in the hall in the daily session of physical and creative play, with teachers constantly feeding and reinforcing new words, such as "swamp" and "marsh" in their "jungle" play.
- 35 Literacy skills are developed very well in sessions where teachers model writing and sentence construction. As a result, children are attempting to write for themselves and the large group of higher-attaining children can already use their knowledge of sounds of parts of words to write simple text unaided. Overall, children with the ability to learn quickly are identified and catered for very well, as are children with special educational needs. The adult team, of teachers and teaching assistants, promote learning very well. The teaching of letter sounds is also very good with the consequence that children try very hard to read unknown words. Very careful records are kept, enabling the teaching team to group children to teach them the next learning steps and make the best use of available time. Teachers use large-scale books well to help too but sometimes the writing is not big enough or the teacher inadvertently covers the text as she reads so the full benefit is not always gained by the class.

Mathematical development

Provision in mathematical development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is of a very high standard with number being a priority.
- Some very good use is made of free-play activities to extend children's mathematical understanding.

Commentary

- 36 Teaching and learning are very good. As a result children achieve very well over their time in the reception classes and progress is very good especially in their understanding of number. The majority of children exceed the expectations of the early learning goals in this area of learning by the end of the reception year. This is because of the myriad of opportunities that adults give to children to count and the very high expectations that they have for children's attainment. Teachers plan a very good range of interesting and suitable tasks to help children extend their mathematics knowledge and skills; consequently, children are keen to take part and this in turn helps to improve their skills. Work is targeted well to individuals within a whole-class session by differing levels of questioning being provided by the teacher. This ensures that all abilities of children are gaining very well from the teaching with the more advanced children able to count large amounts confidently and say which number is greater and the most able to understand counting up in tens.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are given to develop children's understanding of the world around them.
 - Very high expectations for children's learning of information and communication technology and skilful teaching are leading to very high standards.
 - Small classrooms are limiting provision.
- 37 In their knowledge and understanding of the world children achieve well. Teaching and learning are good. A substantial minority are on course to exceed the expected level for their age by the end of the year because of the good curriculum being provided for them. Teachers plan together successfully for knowledge and understanding of the world, and together they produce a good range of activities and experiences that stimulate the children's desire to learn and enhance their knowledge. Stories and times in the hall are particularly well used to extend children's understanding. Good use is also made of a role-play shop with very good support being provided by a teaching assistant. While teaching is good overall, more could be provided to explore the recent past and natural objects, or interesting or beautiful objects to feel or smell in less structured learning times. The small classroom spaces curtail the teachers' ability to provide fully for this area.
- 38 Very good provision is made for children's learning of information and communication technology. Computers are constantly in use in classrooms. Children access them very well and use them very independently with a very high level of mouse control. In direct teaching times for information and communication technology, interactive white boards and laptop computers are

being very skilfully used to teach children and, coupled with very high expectations, are leading to very high standards.

Physical development

Provision for physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school compensates well for the lack of space inside and has put in place an enclosed secure play area outside.
- Very good daily use is made of the hall that combines physical development with creative role-play.
- Children's ability to manipulate small objects is developed well

39 The teaching of physical development is good overall. Last time the school was inspected the lack of a freely available outdoor play space was noted as a weakness. The school has corrected this and now groups of children can play safely in an enclosed area outside with suitable equipment and good adult support and care. Children achieve well, with good control of their bodies during physical development lessons and when playing outside. Indoor activities, such as physical education in the hall, are taught well and help improve their skills still further. In these lessons there is good attention to moving different ways, experimenting and children demonstrating their newly acquired skills. The early-morning sessions that combine physical development with creative role-play are very good and greatly enjoyed by the children. The children's ability for fine movements is developing well so that by the end of the year a large minority are likely to be better than average and the school provides some good activities to encourage precise small movements, such as letter formation practice.

Creative development

Provision for creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good opportunities are given for children to develop their imagination in early-morning hall-times.
- Too few opportunities and encouragement are given for children to explore colour, texture, form and space in two-and three-dimensions in innovative and challenging ways.

Commentary

40 Teaching and learning are satisfactory and, as a result, children make satisfactory progress. Achievement is satisfactory and the majority of children achieve the standards expected for their age. Creative lessons are well planned but day-to-day activities for children are limited by a relative weakness in suitable resources. Activities tend to be rather routine and repetitive and the level of challenge and expectations are at times too low. As a result children rarely stay long at these activities. Good opportunities were provided for role-play in a jungle, toy shop and puppet theatre.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and support promotes very good standards.
- Pupils achieve very well throughout the school
- Pupils are highly motivated by the very good teaching methods employed.
- With the exception of information and communication technology, too few links are formed with other areas of the curriculum to extend and reinforce reading and writing skills.
- Very good self-assessment practice by pupils and other very thorough assessments help both staff and pupils to understand where improvement is needed and plan for it.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Commentary

- 41 Pupils achieve very well across the school. Standards are currently well above the national average with a large percentage of pupils exceeding the nationally expected level both for 11- and seven-year-olds. Inspection findings are consistent with the 2004 national test results for the end of Year 6 and Year 2. In 2004, standards at the end of Year 2 in reading and writing were in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally and when compared to similar schools. Standards have been maintained well above national levels in recent years across the school and are of a similar high standard to those found by the last inspection. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well from their average starting point when they enter the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those with the ability to learn more quickly than average are very well provided for and as a result make very good progress towards their personal targets. No significant difference was found between the performance of girls and boys.
- 42 Pupils make very good progress in developing speaking and listening skills and standards are very high. In the majority of lessons, both in literacy and other subjects, pupils are given many very good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. To extend their understanding, they talk often in pairs or in small groups, as exemplified in a Year 6 lesson where the task was to invent rhyming couplets as part of a "Three Billy Goats Rapp". Staff teach speaking and listening very well. They provide many opportunities through questioning for pupils to talk and listen. They model and give praise for interesting and complex vocabulary and sentence structure as well as constantly feeding in new words. Consequently, as pupils move up the school, they become confident and coherent speakers, able to explain their views very well and listen carefully to the views of others.
- 43 Standards in writing are well above average across the school. In most years over half the pupils exceed the national expectations for their age; so that by

the time pupils reach the top few years they produce very expressive, sensitive, and very mature writing for their age. The quality of writing in their books is very good. Books are very tidy. Written work is always labelled with the aim for the lesson, thus making it easy for pupils to self-assess, which they do at the end of each lesson. They state how well they feel they have done and more importantly how they know this, thus constantly reinforcing their learning and their next learning target. This excellent system is one of the ways that the school is maintaining these very high standards. Overall, the teaching of writing is very good, with some excellent teaching of writing seen as part of the inspection. Teachers use a very wide range of strong methods, with pupils scribing on whiteboards a lot, ensuring that all pupils practise and contribute. Tasks are highly motivating and challenging. Coupled with very good support for less-able pupils, extra tuition for the most-able writers and very good relationships and encouragement, teachers ensure that all pupils blossom.

- 44 Standards in reading are very high. Across the school, reading is taught very well. Work is very well planned to include constant opportunities to read in small and whole-class groups as well as to read with adults individually and take books home. Texts are very well chosen. For younger pupils, word decoding skills are taught very well so that pupils quickly see themselves as readers and want to read. The quality of books in classrooms is satisfactory overall, although some large-scale books for reading with a whole class lack large enough print or are in poor condition.
- 45 Teaching and learning are very good overall. Excellent lessons were seen both in a Year 5 and 6 class and in a Year 5 lesson. Lessons are very well planned and taught. Teachers strive to make lessons interesting. They constantly use praise to very good effect, to raise self-esteem, maintain the very good behaviour and reinforce learning points. A very wide variety of very good methods are used to promote learning with drafting and the development of ideas and vocabulary strongly encouraged. Some very good use is made of laptop computers in literacy lessons. Marking of pupils' books is also very good. A lot of time is given to the subject.
- 46 Leadership and management of English are very good and are clearly influencing the maintenance of these very high standards. Monitoring and evaluation of lessons are routine. Classes and individual pupils are well assessed and followed through their school career. High, very challenging targets are set and achieved. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable about the subject and is a very good role model for other teachers. Her subject knowledge and expertise are also recognised and employed by outside agencies. The curriculum is very good. The co-ordinator is very committed and very enthusiastic and cares passionately about her subject.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

- 47 Satisfactory use is made of language and literacy overall in other areas of the curriculum. When planning for learning, teachers provide relevant opportunities for children to practise and apply reading, writing, speaking and listening skills across the curriculum, such as writing lists in sketch books. There is too little

use of topics from subjects such as history or geography as the focus of literacy lessons. Very good use is made of speaking and listening which is planned into most lessons in all subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good, meeting the needs of all pupils and standards are very high.
- Very effective support staff make a very valuable contribution to the ongoing achievement of lower-attaining pupils.
- Very good assessment information is used to identify the next stage of pupils' learning.
- Pupils are heavily involved in monitoring their own achievement and setting targets for improvement.
- Pupils show very good levels of interest and display very positive attitudes to learning.

Commentary

- 48 Attainment for pupils at the end of Year 2 is well above the national average. Similarly, pupils at the end of Year 6 also attain standards that are well above the national average. The number of pupils achieving at the higher level, in both age groups, is well above the national average. When comparing standards against those attained by pupils in similar schools pupils achieve very well. Over the last four years standards have remained consistently high. In 2004, standards at the end of Year 2 were in the top 5 per cent of all pupils nationally and in comparison with similar schools. At the end of Year 6, standards in 2004 were also in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally. Inspection evidence shows that since the last inspection, overall improvement has been good. Since then the high standards identified at Year 2 have been maintained, whilst standards at the end of Year 6 have improved. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well and make very good progress towards their targets in their individual education plans.
- 49 The quality of teaching is very good and is closely correlated to the very good quality of learning. Teachers' planning is very good. Lessons, therefore, often result in vibrant and exciting lessons, in which the emphasis is often on practical activities that are closely related to real-life experiences. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They challenge them with well-crafted questions and activities, demanding their full concentration and considered responses. Levels of difficulty are progressively increased within lessons and, through this, pupils quickly achieve success. Very effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that pupils with special educational needs as well as lower-attaining pupils are very well supported. Consequently, their high level of achievement and rate of learning matches that of other pupils.

The very good relationships between teachers and pupils are enhanced by judicious use of praise and encouragement. Pupils respond well, by working hard, co-operating, and by displaying high levels of confidence, enthusiasm and interest in learning. Pupils enjoy lessons. They demonstrate very good instant recall in mental arithmetic and carefully use all their previously acquired knowledge and understanding when investigating and solving problems. A strong feature of learning is the way pupils evaluate and record the extent of their own learning. This, in turn, enables the teacher to help them overcome possible difficulties and to direct them to the next stage of development. The high quality of written work in exercise books is a combination of pupils' pride and effort and the good quality of teachers' marking. Regular homework provision and the use of information and communication technology in lessons are both used as effective tools to support pupils' learning.

- 50 The subject is very well led and managed by a very competent teacher, whose subject knowledge and expertise are also recognised and employed by outside agencies. She successfully ensures that provision for pupils and the support for staff are very high in the ongoing quest to maintain and improve the existing high standards. Very good assessment procedures are in place. They are very effectively used to pinpoint areas for development, to identify and share with pupils their next stage of learning and to inform teachers' future planning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

- 51 Good use is made of a variety of subjects to enable pupils to apply their very good numeracy skills to new situations. As part of science investigations, they are familiar with making accurate measurements using equipment such as Newton metres to gather data that is represented as line graphs. Links between art and design and design and technology extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of ideas related to the properties of shape. In history, pupils develop a good awareness of relative time and in geography, pupils utilise their good knowledge and understanding of grid references when using maps as well as exploiting opportunities through field work to apply skills of measurement. Links with information and communication technology vary from class to class but, overall, pupils are developing a good knowledge and understanding of using computer programmes to collate and represent mathematical data.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average and pupils achieve very well in their time in the school.
- Many pupils think at high levels and perform scientific investigations well for their age.
- Very good teaching ensures that good use is made of assessment to plan exciting lessons.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and enjoy learning.
- The subject is very well led and managed with very effective monitoring systems.
- Pupils could extend their learning further through better use of information and communication technology.

Commentary

- 52 Teacher assessment for Year 2 pupils in 2004 showed that pupils were in the top 5% of schools nationally and in comparison with similar schools. National Curriculum test results for Year 6 pupils in 2004 were well above the national average and in comparison with similar schools on the basis of prior attainment. The very high standards noted at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Assessment data and inspection findings agree that standards in science are currently well above the national expectations at the end of both Years 2 and 6. These very high standards have been consistently maintained over recent years, which is testament to the hard work and dedication of the subject leader and staff. In their time in the school, pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas and achievement is very good overall. Pupils with special educational needs do very well and often reach similar standards to other pupils.

- 53 By the end of Year 2, pupils have benefited from being expected to think for themselves and to make advanced deductions from the investigations and experiments that they have pursued. Many children at the age of seven are already thinking at levels typical of nine year olds and beyond. They have a very clear understanding for their age of the way living things are interconnected and reliant on each other, the possible reasons why materials change their shape and form and have started to build up an understanding of “invisible” things such as forces and their effects. Most pupils are well versed in how to plan and carry out relevant scientific investigations, although in this area, pupils could record their work with more precision. In Years 3 to 6, pupils respond to the teachers’ high expectations to think for themselves. The time taken to enable pupils to say what they think and to give reasons for what they find out benefits pupils’ knowledge and understanding of complex scientific ideas. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a very good understanding of the need to gather evidence accurately so that deductions are reliable when seeking whether or not their predictions are accurate. Although the recording of pupils’ work is generally of a good standard, the expectation for gathering environmental data through the use of information and communication technology is a relative weakness.
- 54 The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are carefully planned to match pupils’ needs and good use is made of assessment to make sure that pupils are being challenged. Because science work is usually placed into a context that is familiar in everyday life, pupils are keen to learn and explore new and challenging ideas. A good balance is struck by teachers between a formal, informative style of teaching which develops pupils’ factual knowledge whilst also building in time for pupils to “find out for themselves”. All lessons fit in closely with the school’s curriculum and this ensures that pupils systematically build on previous learning. At times some very good use is made of information and communication technology to support learning and extend science into other areas, such as researching into the different states of matter. Very good support by teaching assistants for pupils who need additional support ensures that all pupils are fully involved in lessons. Because pupils are familiar with evaluating their own strengths and weaknesses, they have a mature understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses in science, and this acts as a motivator to work harder on the areas that need improving. Good marking is a key factor in enabling pupils to improve and good use of homework sensibly enhances the breadth of learning. In all lessons observed, pupils worked hard, co-operated well and were eager to do well.
- 55 The quality of leadership and management of science is very good. The subject leader has a very good knowledge and understanding of primary science. The very effective systems for enabling her to monitor standards, teaching and learning keep her very well informed and make a significant contribution to the carefully constructed annual development plan for the subject. The very good assessment systems provide good quality data which is used to evaluate how well the curriculum is structured so that adaptations can be made to improve further the quality of provision. The very good quality of provision has been maintained since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Investments in resources and staff training have had a significant impact on raising standards.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to using computers and teachers make good use of laptops to support learning.
- There is a very clear vision for the subject's development that is put into practice by very good management.
- Good use is made of information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects.
- Limitations in resources restrict pupils' achievement in some areas of the subject.

Commentary

- 56 Standards in information and communication technology have risen since the last inspection and there has been good improvement. They are currently above national expectations by the end of both Years 2 and 6. The vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well, although there are some who have gaps in their learning in the past. Significant investments in a mobile information and communication technology suite and in some interactive whiteboards have had a marked impact on boosting learning. Very effective staff training and development have ensured that the new resources are used effectively to support learning across the school.
- 57 In Years 1 and 2, pupils are very secure and confident in using computers. They are very familiar with using the laptops and see them as natural extensions to their learning. Pupils are very competent at using word processing skills and regularly use the computer to extend their knowledge and understanding of basic mathematics and writing. Pupils are confident at using design programmes to generate pictures of winter and summer scenes. In years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress and they achieve well. Their skills of word processing increase well with pupils developing the additional skills of selecting and importing images and pictures to support the text, including digital photographs taken by the pupils themselves. Good use is made of CD ROMs to research into subjects such as geography and history and older pupils are developing advanced skills of presenting information using multi-media presentations. Relative weaknesses are in the area of sensing. Good links with the local Catholic high school enable Year 6 pupils to develop expertise in control technology, but limitations in resources had prevented opportunities for pupils to develop skills of gathering data using sensors and also use of e-mail links.

- 58 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some very good aspects. Where access exists to interactive whiteboards, teaching and learning is boosted. As part of a study of a local river, very effective use of such a whiteboard enabled pupils and teachers to work closely together in order to apply their advanced skills to design a multimedia presentation. Teachers and support staff are confident to use information and communication technology and, increasingly, the flexibility of the laptops and the benefits of using the digital camera are being realised. Because lessons often incorporate computers to support learning, for example in literacy and mathematics, pupils see a reason for its use and are very enthusiastic and very well behaved. They willingly take responsibility for their own learning and, as a matter of course, help out others who may be having some difficulties.
- 59 The subject is very well led and managed. Very effective training has ensured that many staff are very confident, and very good communication between all staff means that support is always available should individual staff members need it. Very effective systems for the monitoring of teaching and learning make sure that the school is fully aware of its strengths and any areas for development. The significant increase in resources has lifted the profile of the subject and plans to improve access to the internet and to extend use of sensing equipment are due to rectify relative areas of weakness.

The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum

- 60 The use of information and communication technology to support learning across the curriculum is good. The school capitalises on using pupils' developing skills to enhance learning and standards in other subjects. Information and communication technology is used most effectively to support English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology and the humanities. Pupils are very confident to use information and communication technology to create designs, to produce good quality stories and poems and to interpret and represent data. Research skills are effectively developed using CD ROMs and fully protected Internet links.

HUMANITIES

- 61 Limitations of time meant that it was not possible to make secure judgements about the provision in history. Geography, however, was inspected in full and is reported below.
- 62 In **history**, pupils' work was sampled and discussions were conducted with pupils. Evidence shows that standards have improved since the last inspection and are now above the national expectations at the end of both Years 2 and 6. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of their programmes of study. In Year 2, pupils develop a sense of chronology by writing about their own family relationships and comparing differences. They can talk about people who lived in the past and record and remember details and events. For example, they recall Francis Drake, the Golden Hind, his world journey and the Armada. Year 6 pupils particularly enjoy history. This is evident in their well-presented workbooks that show not only their understanding of history, but the way they researched and recorded their findings. Pupils' work also illustrates how they empathise with children and people of other eras. In discussion they arrange different events and ages in the correct order and give detailed accounts of some aspects of what happened during that time. They are equally at home discussing the reforms to child labour in Victorian times, the contribution to children by Doctor Barnado, or the lifestyle of people who lived in the distant time of history, the 1960's!

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use a variety of methods to encourage pupils to learn.
- The curriculum is well supported by linking geography with other subjects.
- Learning is enhanced through well-planned field studies closely linked to programmes of study.

Commentary

- 63 Standards have improved since the last inspection. Pupils are now achieving well and standards are above the national expectations at the end of both Years 2 and 6. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of the differences between human and physical geography. They talk about their local environment, comparing it to the Island of Coll. Their knowledge of the points of a compass enables them to ensure that they can rotate a map to its correct position. At Year 6, pupils demonstrate their knowledge of continents, countries and capitals. Their skills are good and they use appropriate technical language when describing features of a river. However, their knowledge of UK rivers and mountains, and rivers of the world is only satisfactorily developed.
- 64 Generally teaching is very good and this leads to pupils making good progress and achieving well. Just occasionally teaching is satisfactory. When this occurs it is usually because the pace is a little slow or because the activity is not stimulating enough. Planning, on the whole, however, is usually good. A very good feature is the number of field trips that provide pupils with first hand experiences and make learning come to life. For instance, a study of a local river for pupils in Year 6 led to a lively discussion and provided the platform for considering the impact of humans on the environment. Teachers encourage children to learn through a variety of methods, including their own research through books or the Internet. Very good use is made of information and communication technology by teachers to promote learning. High expectations exist for older pupils, for example, to create high quality multimedia presentations based upon the field study of the local river. Good links are made at times with other subjects, for instance linking the water cycle with the processes of change of matter in science. Pupils enjoy geography and take a pride in their work.
- 65 Leadership and management of the subject are good. Currently there is a school focus on the subject in order to improve provision and further raise standards. The blocked programmes of study are featured in one term only. However, in other terms, appropriate compensation is provided through additional planned geography afternoons, as well as links through other subjects. Regular monitoring of the curriculum takes place through scrutiny of pupils' work and of teachers' planning, although there is only limited observation of teaching. Assessment procedures are good and well established and enable teachers to identify and monitor pupils' progress. Resources are generally good and good improvements to the provision have occurred since the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

- 66 Limitations of time meant that it was not possible to make secure judgements about the provision in **art and design** or **physical education**. **Music** was inspected in full and is reported below.
- 67 In **art and design** the curriculum is satisfactory. Discussions with pupils and an examination of their art work in sketch books and work displayed around the school indicate that they have skills and knowledge, both in Year 2 and Year 6,

that are in line with expectations. Some work displayed, for example, in Years 5 and 6, is of a good standard but, overall, work varies in quality from satisfactory to good. Pupils are given too few opportunities to choose the media for themselves and this reduces their ability to make informed judgements as to which medium they will use for a particular style or effect. Discussion with both seven and 11-year-old pupils indicates that whilst they know about the work of some famous artists for example, Van Gogh and Picasso, their knowledge of famous artists is relatively narrow.

- 68 In **design and technology**, pupils are regularly given concentrated time so that they are able to start and complete design and technology assignments. This curriculum innovation is effective because it enables pupils to learn to understand the complete “design cycle”. Pupils develop a satisfactory range of skills and knowledge about a range of materials including everyday things such as card and paper to familiar foods and some fabrics. Discussion with pupils, however, shows that their knowledge and understanding of the significance of structures and mechanisms is relatively weak. The quality of pupils’ recording of their design tasks is satisfactory, but expectations differ from class to class and this reduces the effectiveness of pupils’ self-evaluation and the efficiency of the subject leader in monitoring standards and learning. The subject is led satisfactorily by an enthusiastic teacher, The subject is constantly under review and there is recognition of the need to improve the curriculum to strengthen links between design and technology and other subjects such as science and history.
- 69 In **physical education**, there are many exciting opportunities offered to pupils through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Some children received coaching from a representative of a local rugby league club during the inspection. Similar support is also received from the football club. There is a strong local sports association that provides for pupils’ involvement in several other sporting activities and tournaments. By the end of Year 6, all pupils have benefited through regular access to swimming provision and are able to swim a distance of at least 25 metres. Currently the school is prioritising physical education as an area of development. One interesting aspect of this is its links with information and communication technology. As a result, very good teaching and learning in a dance lesson were enhanced because of the teacher’s very effective use of film and video recorder. It promoted ideas and was then used to record, demonstrate and evaluate pupils’ performances on screen, leading to improved performances.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy the lessons and are developing a good level of skill by the end of Year 6.
- Good improvements have been made in extra-curricular lessons and the provision of musical instruments since the last inspection.

- Pupils have a relatively limited knowledge of well-known composers.

Commentary

- 70 Pupils achieve well overall in their time in school. Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and above them at the end of Year 6. Pupils join in enthusiastically and, when given the opportunity to compose and accompany, perform to a good level. They are also able to objectively evaluate their work when they repeat it or when it is recorded and to suggest ways that their performance can be enhanced. However, discussion with older pupils suggests that they know little of the work of well-known composers or types of music.
- 71 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers make use of good resources to provide varied and enjoyable lessons. They encourage pupils to use skills gained elsewhere, such as in the after-school recorder club, to enhance the performance of the class, and occasionally add dance movements to music. Good management skills allow pupils to take part fully and play instruments in a controlled manner and therefore further develop their playing skills. Extra-curricular activities, such as brass instrument tuition, a brass-players group, two recorder groups and a strong choir, all enhance the school's provision. This is much better than at the time of the last inspection where there were no instruments being learnt.
- 72 The leadership and management of music are good. There is a good curriculum in place. The leader has a clear vision for the subject's development and there are good systems in place for monitoring standards and recording assessments. Resources have been improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory overall. The overall quality of provision, however, has been maintained since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

- 73 No direct teaching was seen during the inspection, but it is clear that the school has a number of very good initiatives appertaining to this aspect of the curriculum. There is a weekly allocation of time for lessons in classes. Aspects of learning are often linked to other areas of the curriculum, particularly in science, religious education and through assemblies. Workbooks throughout the school cover a wide range of topics. They enable children in Year 2 to express their opinions about choices, feelings and decisions, for instance by learning to recognise the need to care for their pets and their environment. Pupils develop a good understanding of what is meant by community - in school, locally, and through people who support and help them. By Year 6, pupils have extended all these aspects of learning. They have strong views on citizenship, strengthened by the work of the school council. Teachers have introduced topics encouraging pupils to be aware of politics. Pupils willingly write about and discuss aspects of the European Community, children's rights linked to responsibilities, and how to run a democratic election. Pupils show good empathy with other people and the circumstances in which they live. For

instance, they are very aware of world poverty and the impact on so many lives of the recent Tsunami disaster. Pupils contribute to fundraising and have written very moving prayers in support of the people involved. A number of initiatives, some of which are supported through educational visits and visitors to the school, promote pupils' awareness and knowledge of relationships and sex education and also raise pupils' awareness of the dangers of the misuse of drugs.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Grade
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
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).

