

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Handsworth, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103403

Headteacher: Mrs Ava Sturridge-Packer

Reporting inspector: Mr David Carrington
15414

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th February 2001

Inspection number: 188488

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

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:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hamstead Road Handsworth Birmingham
Postcode:	B20 2RW
Telephone number:	0121 554 3751
Fax number:	0121 554 3335
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev Brian Hall
Date of previous inspection:	24 th – 28 th June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15414	Mr David Carrington	Registered inspector	English as an additional language Equal opportunities	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Pupils' welfare, health and safety
9479	Mrs Christine Field	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and values and personal development Partnership with parents and carers
8358	Mr Alan Blank	Team inspector	Science Geography History	Leadership and management
20326	Mr Peter Clark	Team inspector	English Music Aspects of education for children in the Foundation Stage	
23866	Mr Steve Hall	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Physical education	Quality of learning opportunities
15015	Mr Mike Wehrmeyer	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Religious education Special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

Trio Inspections
Cherry Trees
Wenlock Road
Tasley
Bridgnorth
Shropshire
WV16 4QB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	25
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Church of England Primary School is located in the Handsworth residential district to the north of Birmingham city centre. The school is bigger than most primary school and has 132 girls and 128 boys, with another 49 part time pupils in the nursery. The pupils come from the area around the school and have below average levels of knowledge and skills when they start in the nursery. The school welcomes pupils from many different social and ethnic backgrounds and aims to cater successfully for each one as part of its Church of England tradition. The diversity of the pupils can be seen in the fact that nearly 90 per cent of all pupils come from homes where English is not the first language, an even greater proportion are from minority ethnic groups and over 20 per cent have special educational needs. Five pupils have statements of special educational needs. In addition, about 20 per cent do not complete the full seven years in school and nearly 35 per cent are entitled to free school meals. In all cases this is above, or well above, the proportion usually found in primary schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mary's Church of England Primary School provides an effective education for its pupils. The headteacher has turned this once-failing school around, and it now has a bright future. All members of staff are valued for their strengths and there is shared determination to improve any shortcomings. Standards are rising because there is effective teaching and learning and progress over time is good. There are still a number of areas that school has to improve, but the willingness and capability amongst the staff and governors is there. The headteacher does an excellent job of steering the school to better things and the pupils are getting a much improved deal because of this. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher is an excellent leader and she keeps the school firmly on track to make improvements. She is very successful in enabling all staff to work to their strengths.
- The quality of learning is good and pupils make good progress because teaching is much better than before.
- Pupils who do not speak English at home and those who have special educational needs are given good support and they build skills and knowledge at good rates.
- The school is a place where pupils of all social backgrounds, faiths and ethnic origins mix successfully, support each other superbly and are at ease with one-another.
- Pupils develop into pleasant and very well behaved individuals whose talents are celebrated and strengthened.

What could be improved

- Whilst standards have improved, there is still work to boost standards in English, mathematics and science and in geography, history and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Assessment and target setting are not yet focused enough on the progress made by individual pupils.
- Subject coordinators are not consistently involved in checking that standards, teaching and learning are the best they can be.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Special measures were applied to the school in 1996 because it was failing to provide an acceptable level of education for the pupils. Chief amongst the weaknesses were:

- low standards
- unsatisfactory teaching
- poor behaviour
- poor leadership and management until the recent appointment of the new headteacher.

Seven key issues were set for the school to assist it correct the weaknesses. Since that time, senior managers have worked hard to improve on all fronts. In 1999, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools judged that enough progress had been made, and took the school out of special measures, though there were still things to tackle. Today, things have improved further, and the school is a much-stronger place. Standards are rising, there is no unsatisfactory teaching, and leadership and management have many strengths. The headteacher has done a splendid job of turning the school around and giving the heart back to all the pupils and adults who work there.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E	E	D	B
mathematics	E	E	C	A
science	D	E	D	C

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Similar schools are those schools with between 35% and 50% of the pupils entitled to free school meals.

There has been steady improvement in standards of eleven year old pupils in the national tests (SATs) over the past few years. In 2000, the results of Year 6 pupils were similar to those found in most schools in mathematics but were below expectations in English and science. In comparison to pupils in similar schools where between 35 and 50 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, standards were well above average in mathematics, above average in English and average in science. Standards in SATs have not improved to the same extent in the infants.

During the past four years, infant boys have not done as well as the infant girls. However, junior boys close the gap and tend to do a little better than the girls by the age of eleven. In general, compared with other schools not as many pupils go beyond the expected standards in the SATs in both the infants and the juniors.

Since the starting level of many pupils is below what is expected, the standards reached by the age of eleven are appropriate and overall progress is good. In other subjects, standards are at the expected level in physical education are above average in art and design, design and technology, music and religious education. Standards are below expectations in geography, history and information and communication technology by the time pupils leave school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils can't wait to get to school and to work alongside their friends. They want to do well, work hard and are successful learners. They are proud of their own and other pupils' achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There has been major improvement in standards of behaviour. Pupils know exactly how to behave and they work and play in a very orderly way. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are excellent and the school is a model of outstanding racial harmony. Pupils develop into pleasant and cheerful individuals who are good to know.
Attendance	Good. The level of attendance is better than is usually found and most pupils arrive in good time for the start of the school day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Not all pupils in the school have had the benefit of the improved teaching that is now to be found in school and this has slowed the progress that they made in the past. However, the current staff have worked hard to

improve what they do for the pupils and lessons are settled and productive sessions. The pupils are very interested in their work and they concentrate very well. Knowledge, skills and understanding are built at a good rate over time and so the pupils attain standards that are appropriate for them. However, they do not always know enough about how well they are doing in their work.

During the inspection, teaching was good overall. Of the 66 lessons observed, none were unsatisfactory and there was much excellent and very good teaching seen.

Strengths of teaching include very good class management and basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. The needs of all pupils are met successfully, teachers have high expectations and support staff make a significant contribution to the successes of the pupils. Areas for improvement include the sharing with pupils of the knowledge, skills and understanding to be learned in lessons, some loss of time at the start of lessons and the marking of work to show how pupils can improve. Senior managers know that there is still work to do to make teaching the best it can be, but staff are resolved to do this, and to give their pupils the best deal going.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is rich and rewarding and includes good strategies for teaching basic literacy and numeracy. Some aspects of geography, history and information and communication technology could be strengthened but art and design, music and the personal development of pupils are very well served.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils are given well-targeted support that enables them to build knowledge and skills at a good rate. They are very valued members of school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils who do not speak English at home are supported well and this enables them to make good progress. By the time they are eleven years old most speak and write English effectively.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. This aspect of education is one of the school's great strengths. The quality of spiritual development is excellent because pupils think deeply about what makes life special, and they celebrate the contributions made by people of different faiths, cultures and ethnic background.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are very well cared for and are kept safe. School managers are working hard to improve some aspects of assessment that are not yet firmly embedded.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory. Most parents are pleased with the education given to their children. The school is working hard to build the partnership with parents, but not all parents are confident to join this.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is an excellent leader. She has pulled the school up from the lows of four years ago and has boosted the morale and determination of all staff. Coordinators could have more responsibility for the standards and quality of teaching and learning in their subjects but the pupils are now getting a good deal from the school because their interests are put first.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are increasingly influencing key decisions and checking that these bring the desired results.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The priorities of the school are spot-on and the action taken to meet them is excellent. Everyone knows what the next tasks are for the school and they work hard to improve where necessary.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school spends more money than comes in. This situation is watched carefully and money is spent wisely in the interests of the pupils. Support staff do an excellent job of helping pupils to succeed and the administration, catering, care and cleaning staff take a pride in their work. The school is a cheerful and welcoming place because of this. Governors and staff ensure that the principles of <i>best value</i> are applied properly. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed and is easy to approach when there are concerns. • Teaching is good and pupils make good progress. • Expectations are high • Pupils' behaviour is good and they become mature and responsible learners. • The school works closely with parents and gives them good quality information about how well their children are doing. • Their children like coming to school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amounts and regularity of homework are inconsistent. • There are not enough activities outside lessons.

The inspection team has no hesitation in agreeing with the things that please most parents. Inspectors also judge that levels of homework are satisfactory and that the range of activities outside lessons is similar to that found in many primary schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Satisfactory, and improving, standards.

- ❑ Standards have improved significantly since the 1996 inspection when they were low.
- ❑ Children start school with below average levels of knowledge and skill.
- ❑ All pupils, including those with special educational needs or those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress.
- ❑ In 2000, standards in the Year 6 Standardised Attainment Tests (SATs) were below the level found nationally in English and science but average in mathematics.
- ❑ Compared to similar schools, Year 6 standards in 2000 were above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics.
- ❑ Improving standards in English and mathematics are due to important changes made to teaching, learning and the curriculum.
- ❑ Standards in geography, history and information and communication technology (ICT) are not yet at the level found in other subjects.
- ❑ Standards in art and design, design and technology, music and religious education are good by the age of 11.
- ❑ Higher attainers are not doing as well as similar pupils in other schools, but pupils from minority ethnic groups are doing well on the whole.
- ❑ Improvement to assessment and target setting, sharing and evaluation will contribute to further raising of standards.

1. One major reason for the school being placed in special measures in 1996 was the low standards achieved by pupils. The previous inspection report judged that pupils were getting a rough deal and that they were capable of much better things. Just under four years later, standards have risen and pupils are now closer to achieving their full potential. This is a significant improvement.
2. There are a number of key factors that influence the standards in school. However, all staff are adamant that these should not prevent pupils doing the best they can. Nonetheless, the following have a bearing on what is achieved:
 - When pupils start school their level of skills and knowledge is below average.
 - All but a few pupils speak languages other than English at home or they speak Creole patois.
 - More than a fifth of all pupils join the school after the usual starting point in reception. This rises to over a quarter of Year 2 and nearly a half of Year 3 pupils. Many other pupils leave school before the end of Year 6.
 - A greater proportion of pupils has special educational needs than is found in most schools.
3. On the whole, pupils make good progress during their time in school and standards at the age of eleven are at the expected level. Managers have worked very hard, and successfully, to eliminate the weaknesses in teaching and learning that prevented pupils achieving well in 1996. By 1999, when Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) revisited St Mary's School, they judged that standards had risen sufficiently to take the school out of special measures. However, one of the remaining weaknesses in school concerned standards in English, mathematics and science. These had improved satisfactorily by 1999, but were still not high enough. The introduction of the literacy hour, and one year later, the numeracy hour has had good effect and today, standards in English and mathematics are better than they were in 1999. Inspectors judge that, this time round, standards are satisfactory in mathematics at the age of seven and eleven and are also satisfactory in English by the age of eleven. They are still below the expected level in English at the age of seven. This strike rate of three out of

four is good improvement, but it is not good enough for the staff, all of whom are working to add the fourth to the tally.

4. The pattern of attainment in all the subjects in school is summarised in the chart below.

Subject	At age seven	At age eleven
English	below average	average
Mathematics	average	average
Science	average	average
Art and design	above average	above average
Design and technology	average	above average
Geography	below average	below average
History	below average	below average
ICT	below average	below average
Music	above average	above average
Physical education	average	average
Religious education	above average	above average

5. From this table it can be seen that the school has strengths in art and design, design and technology, music and religious education, but that there is still work to be done to boost standards in geography, history and ICT in addition to English as mentioned above. Standards in each of these subjects are discussed in the final part of this report, along with the identification of factors that lead to strengths and shortcomings.
6. In English, mathematics and science, the above standards are an improvement on the results of the 2000 national tests and teacher assessments (SATs) in both Years 2 and 6. Last year, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below those found at the age of seven in most primary schools. Eleven-year-old pupils achieved standards below the national level in English and science, but standards in mathematics were similar to the national level. When these results are set against those from schools where between 35 per cent and 50 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, they were below average at the age of seven. They were above average in English and science, and well above average in mathematics at the age of eleven.
7. The improvement between the parallel classes in 2000 and 2001 is due to several factors:
- Teachers have been assigned to different classes to reflect their strengths.
 - The several teachers new to the school have made a very positive start to their time at St Mary's.
 - Support staff are more effectively used to support pupils with particular needs.
 - Booster classes for raising attainment and additional support for writing in literacy are having good impact.
 - The climate for improvement in school is much stronger now.
 - All staff are much more confident than in the past and morale is very good.
 - The literacy and numeracy hours continue to have good effect on rates of progress.
 - The school's early attempt to use target setting as a means to boost standards is paying off.
8. These factors also influence the attainment of different groups within school. The higher attainers did not do as well in the 2000 SATs as might be expected. A good number of Year 6 pupils went on to selective secondary schools but the proportion achieving the higher level 5 in the Year 6 SATs was below that found in most schools. Higher attaining seven-year-old pupils also did less well than similar pupils in other schools. During the current inspection, it was judged that there are good levels of challenge for the higher attainers and for those with particular talents. Some demanding work was set in lessons observed, such as the Year 3/4 class that used their knowledge of the eight times table to calculate mentally the multiples of 800.

9. When the attainment of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds is examined, it is evident that standards are again rather different in the school to the picture found nationally. School managers have very carefully analysed the attainment of African-Caribbean boys, for example. In the 2000 SATs these boys performed much better at St Mary's than similar boys in other schools. Only once did inspectors observe African-Caribbean boys lag behind the rest of their classmates in a lesson when several wasted time. At all other times they did just as well as their friends from other ethnic groups.
10. Those pupils who speak English as an additional language are given timely support in lessons. The support staff do an excellent job of helping such pupils to develop fluency and expression in written and spoken English and in reading. This enables the pupils to do as well as pupils for whom English is their first language and by the age of eleven their use of English is assured. In the case of the large proportion of pupils who speak Creole patois, they switch between versions of English as and when required. This enables them to celebrate the richness of both standard English and their own dialect. Teaching and support staff are very good role models in such language diversity, and inspectors judged a lesson where the teacher used Creole patois in addition to standard English to talk about a visit to Jamaica to be highly effective. The non-Creole patois speakers were equally fascinated by the lesson and had good understanding of the cultural traditions of people from other ethnic backgrounds.
11. The level of attainment of pupils who have special educational needs is well below national averages. The inspection findings confirm the school's view that these pupils make good progress because they are particularly well assisted during their work in the classrooms, both by teachers and support assistants.
12. The school still has a number of things to do to lift standards to the best level in all subjects:
 - Improved monitoring of standards, teaching and learning;
 - Sharper ways to assess what is being learned and how fast;
 - More setting and sharing of targets for learning with the pupils;
 - Encouraging pupils to evaluate their own learning
13. These will all contribute to the continuing process of raising standards. However, it is clear that the commitment to improvement, determination to succeed, and positive action, have all helped to eliminate the second best, and to move the school closer to the gold standard.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Very good

- Pupils are very keen to come to school, they like their work and put in good effort because of this.
- The school is very orderly and pupils quickly learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- The level of racial harmony is excellent and everyone in school celebrates the diversity of pupils' backgrounds.
- The pupils accept responsibility very well and work independently when required.
- Relationships are excellent and have a major impact on learning.
- The rate of attendance is better than in most schools.

14. Since the time of the previous inspection in 1996, good attention has been given to promoting positive behaviour management that has resulted in significant improvement in the attitudes displayed by pupils. Pupils at all stages show very good commitment to their studies and most work very purposefully, and with sustained concentration on the interesting work they are given to do by teachers. Older pupils go out of their way to look after younger pupils and are excellent role models at playtime and during the lunch break. Parents show strong support for the way the school is preparing pupils to take their place in a culturally diverse world and recognise the positive way in which tolerant and very harmonious relationships are being fostered. There were no exclusions made last year. The rate of exclusion has declined over the last four years.
15. Children's attitudes throughout the Foundation Stage and earlier part of their school life are good and sometimes very good. Through the patience and sensitivity of the staff they grow in confidence and learn to concentrate for increasing periods of time. Strengths reported in this aspect at the time of the previous inspection have been successfully built upon. Such strengths were well demonstrated in a lesson in reception when the teacher asked children to choose items from a box that they could use to sequence a story. The children were fascinated as they dipped into box, not knowing what to expect but willing to dig deep and discover what was in there. They pulled out binoculars and gloves and let their imaginations take over as they planned their story. Very good relationship promoted a safe environment in which these young children felt confident to take the lead. The lesson ended with a moment of quiet reflection on the lovely things that had happened and what was best.
16. Pupils who have special educational needs maintain a positive self-image as they are enabled to achieve success in their work. Their behaviour is very good. Support assistants encourage independence in the pupils to tackle challenging tasks with determination.
17. By Year 2 pupils are able to work independently and in groups and sustain concentration throughout lessons. Pupils listen carefully, remain interested and work productively. The attitudes of most older pupils are excellent. They settle quickly and work extremely well together. Pupils respond to the brisk pace during the most successful lessons and most quite rightly feel pride in their own and others' achievements. In a lesson in Year 5 based on Egypt, pupils enthusiastically and researched information to help set up their own CD ROM page. They worked constructively and to good effect and accomplished much.
18. Behaviour is very good. Bullying is not a serious issue for the school but when instances occur they are dealt with effectively. Pupils told inspectors they feel safe at school and part of a "big family". The code of conduct is given prominence in classrooms and pupils know exactly what the consequence of their actions will be if they choose to behave inappropriately. The star chart system is encouraging a good level of corporate endeavour, and rewards pupils' individual successes in both academic and personal areas. Regular assemblies to which parents are invited celebrate the personal achievements of a member of each class.

19. Pupils are learning to respect their environment and each other and although naturally curious they direct their questions to adults and visitors in a friendly way. Although the school is a mixed population, pupils get along together well. Relationships are excellent and pupils are well on their way to becoming very responsible future citizens.
20. Attendance levels at the school are above average. This is a significant improvement since the time of the previous inspection when attendance was below average and punctuality poor. Pupils are keen to come to school and most arrive in good time for their lessons. The award of a trophy called 'Handsworth Bear' to the class with the best attendance is motivating pupils to work together to achieve good attendance and is a positive feature. A few pupils have time off from school that is recorded as unauthorised due to the vigilance of staff and thoroughness of monitoring systems.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Teaching and learning are both good.

- Pupils enjoy good learning opportunities because the quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils are interested in their work and put in good effort.
- They build skills and knowledge at a good rate because of this.
- Pupils develop very good levels of responsibility and independence in their learning.
- This could be boosted by more timely focus on what is to be learned in lessons and how the work can be improved when marking.
- Some lessons do not start on time.
- The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall, with no unsatisfactory teaching and over three-quarters was good or better.
- All the staff know the pupils very well and they respond quickly to ensure learning is purposeful and successful.
- The remaining weaknesses in teaching reported in 1996 have been much improved.

21. Improvements to teaching and learning have had major impact on standards and progress. In 1996, the previous inspection team judged that teaching was fundamentally flawed. The proportion of unsatisfactory and poor lessons observed was unacceptably high and pupils just did not make enough progress. In some classes, they were as likely to regress as they were to stand still in their learning. This has all changed and today, the school is a different place where teaching and learning are both good overall.
22. St Mary's Primary School is foremost a place of settled learning. The visitor to school quickly grasps the sense of determination, effort and productivity as s/he walks around school. Doors open into classrooms where pupils enjoy their learning, concentrate deeply and are eager to share their discoveries and celebrate their own and other pupils' successes. Time and time again during their week in school, inspectors were greeted by pupils who wanted to show or explain what they were doing. On several occasions, inspectors were quizzed forcefully by pupils who wanted to know what the inspector thought of their work. This happened in the classroom and in the playground.

23. In lessons, pupils enjoy being with their teachers and the teachers enjoy being with their pupils. This level of excellence in personal relationships goes a long way to create the right conditions for purposeful learning. Some teachers and support staff have tapped this bond more effectively than others have. However, all staff share these qualities and the best practice in school could be usefully harnessed to spread the practice everywhere. In classes where relationships are exploited to the best potential, pupils are taxed by their work; they are given every opportunity to work independently and to grow into mature learners. In this way, they are enabled to take a greater degree of responsibility for their own work.
24. In several cases, pupils were visibly spellbound by the methods and resources used by the teacher. In one assembly, the teacher amazed pupils by changing water into wine as did Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana. This New Testament story came alive for the pupils and they all went out of the hall remembering not just the miracle, but the moral of the story too. In a Year 5/6 science lesson, the teacher's quiet insistence, high expectations and thought provoking questions helped the pupils learn how to separate out chemical substances by sieving, filtering or evaporation. The inspector wrote: *Discussion is animated, brains are clearly being stimulated. This is science at its investigative/curious best.*
25. These two incidents are not exceptions. During the inspection week, 66 lessons or part lessons were observed. Unlike 1996, not one of these was unsatisfactory or poor. In fact, a higher than usual proportion was of good or better teaching quality, including much that was very good or excellent. All teachers share the craft of good teaching. Every individual teacher taught at least one good lesson and most did even better. Some good or very good teaching was seen in each subject observed. English and mathematics are taught well and are promoted well in other subjects. The teaching of pupils in the Foundation Stage is good.
26. Teaching and learning for different groups of pupils are also good. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by teachers and support staff alike. Often the teaching of basic skills centres on carefully selected material linked to the pupils' individual education plans and is very good. In these lessons, teachers and support assistants create good learning conditions of trust and encouragement, setting appropriately high expectations. Close teamwork between class teachers and support assistants ensures the effective transfer of instructions and feedback. The teachers are much more aware of the advantages of matching work to pupils' ability. This good strategy is used in the three core subjects, and is equally valuable in non-core subjects like religious education or design and technology. In one design and technology lesson in Year 3, for instance, lower ability pupils were helped to express their ideas about how a customer might feel about the pots the pupils had made. Some viewpoints suggested it might be a good move not to let the customer know how far the pots had strayed from the original design.
27. Those pupils who speak English as an additional language also share the good teaching and learning. Again, the support staff take a strong role in supporting these pupils to make good progress in their development of speaking, writing and reading skills. Teachers are insistent, when need be, that pupils speak and write standard English and good emphasis is given to the development of a wide vocabulary.
28. There are many strengths in teaching and learning in school:

Strengths in teaching	Lead to strengths in learning
Good teaching of basic skills and very good teaching methods.	Steady building of knowledge, skills and understanding.
Good levels of expectation.	Hard work and good levels of productivity.
Very good organisation of lessons and management of pupils.	Very settled lessons where behaviour is very good.
Very good support given by classroom assistants.	Good progress for all pupils, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language
Good subject knowledge and planning.	Interesting lessons where the response of pupils and concentration are very good.
Good use of learning resources.	Good sense of enquiry and investigation.

29. School managers have developed all staff very well as good practitioners. However, there are one or two things that remain ready for enhancement:

Inconsistencies in teaching	Lead to some
Lessons that don't always start or end on time.	Reduction of learning opportunities.
The variable use of comments when marking books.	Pupils not always knowing how to improve their work.
The infrequency of setting, sharing and reviewing precise targets for learning.	Lack of pupils' own knowledge of how well they are doing.

30. The strengths of teaching and learning can be summed up by a reception year physical education lesson observed during the inspection. Here there were ample opportunities for pupils to explore different ways of travelling. They showed independence in learning as they tried different approaches and the constant encouragement, and reassurance given by the class teacher and the learning support assistant resulted in high quality movements. The pupils balanced on an upturned beam, jumped, with some assistance from the adults, from a challenging height and set themselves increasingly challenging tasks. This was an energetic, safe and enjoyable lesson where skills were stretched in both senses.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

Good

- The curriculum is relevant and stimulating and all pupils benefit from it.
- The literacy and numeracy hours are having good impact on standards.
- There is a satisfactory range of activities outside lessons.
- Pupils develop into very pleasant individuals who are good to talk to because the school does a thorough job of developing their individual talents.

31. There has been a substantial improvement in curriculum provision at the school since the last inspection. The headteacher and staff have worked hard to develop a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of the pupils and satisfies the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education. However, insufficient time is devoted to history and geography. Nonetheless, pupils of all ages and ethnic backgrounds, both boys and girls, have an equal opportunity to access the full range of the National Curriculum and programme for religious education.
32. Systems for planning the curriculum at long, medium and short term levels are now well established but arrangements for using assessment to bring greater focus to planning for pupils' future progress are not as yet securely in place throughout the school. Whilst there are still some gaps in subject

responsibilities the staff have worked collaboratively to ensure that not only are curriculum needs met but also that continuity and progression catered for particularly in mixed age classes.

33. Great strides have been taken in the provision of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education since the last inspection and this is now a strength of the school. There are satisfactory arrangements for health and sex education, the dangers of drug misuse and personal and social education are well developed through many cross-curricular opportunities.
34. The school has a full range of policy documents to support the curriculum although some of these documents indicate that policy is following practice and schemes of work are not fully developed for all subjects. The planning of the curriculum is satisfactory. All of the subjects of the curriculum are appropriately planned; however insufficient attention is given to the progression of skills in some subjects such as physical education. There are good cross-curricular links in the teaching of various subjects in all parts of the school.
35. Short-term planning procedures are satisfactory. Staff plan collaboratively after school. The teachers often plan different work for pupils with differing levels of attainment who are in the same class but this is not consistent across the school. Where planning for the use of classroom assistants is evident, this resource is used most effectively. In many classes, classroom assistants make a valuable and substantial contribution to pupils' learning. Planning for literacy and numeracy is also satisfactory. Systems for monitoring the planning and delivery of the curriculum are being introduced but are not fully in place.
36. Provision for special educational needs is good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when the arrangements were said to be inadequate. All the pupils' individual education plans are in place, and of a consistently good quality. The pupils' targets are clearly defined, and their progress is reviewed at least every six weeks. The pupils share the same provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education as all other pupils.
37. Educational visits and visitors to the school enrich the curriculum particularly where cross-curricular themes and topics are being developed. For example a visit to a pizza bakery and a restaurant provided a worthwhile stimulus for a productive Year 2 food technology project. The school also has links with a local special school that not only provides opportunities for professional development but also supports the pupil's personal and social education. Similarly, the range of extra-curricular activities and family-based social activities such as sports and fun-days make a positive contribution to the pupils' personal and social education.
38. When the school was inspected previously the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was judged to be an area of weakness. As a result of strong leadership from the headteacher, a determined effort from the staff and pupils and support from the church and from the parents, the school has transformed this into a real strength of the school.
39. All pupils have an extremely positive attitude towards the school and their place in it. There is no evidence of unrest amongst the pupils, they have a keen awareness of what is right and what is wrong and their social skills are highly developed. The pupil's behaviour in assemblies, on the playground and whilst moving about the school is exemplary.
40. The focused, well-planned assemblies make a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are spiritually uplifted by the quality of input from staff leading the assemblies. They show great enthusiasm in their singing and exhibit amazement and wonder as demonstrated in an assembly taken by the acting deputy headteacher who told the story of Jesus turning water into wine at a marriage ceremony. Not only was the assembly helping to develop the pupil's understanding of 'family' as a concept, but the visual impact on the pupils of water

apparently being turned into wine in front of their eyes securely fixed their learning of the assembly's spiritual message.

41. The school's policy and practice relating to behaviour management has been most effective and set a standard for others to emulate. The pupils are well-mannered to one another and to adults and show high levels of tolerance and understanding as witnessed during a Year 5/6 PE lesson when an unfortunate lapse of concentration by a goalkeeper in a handball game resulted in a goal being scored against the team. Instead of rounding on the unfortunate goalkeeper, the other members of his team were at pains to reassure and encourage him!
42. The pupils have a great desire to do well and appreciate the recognition they received both individually and as members of a successful class when certificates for good behaviour, high attendance and overall positive attitudes are presented in assemblies. All pupils (and staff!) receiving these awards do so with great pride and satisfaction.
43. The cultural development of the pupils draws heavily from the seamless blend of rich cultural diversity that exists within the school. Wall displays reinforce tolerance and understanding of different faiths and beliefs and the cross-curricular approach in many classes offers many opportunities for developing pupils' cultural understanding.
44. The use of circle time and times of personal reflection at the end of lessons, assemblies and the school day provide valuable opportunities for pupils to consider their feelings, views and opinions and to express them within a supportive and caring environment. As such these times of reflection and consideration make an important contribution to the pupils' personal and social development and of their feeling of well-being.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Well

- The school is very alert in its work to care for pupils and to ensure their welfare.
- Everyone knows each other and needs are well met.
- Equal opportunities, regardless of pupils' background, are at the heart of the school.
- Procedures to assess, check and track individual achievement work soundly in English and especially in mathematics but require improvement in other subjects.

45. Matters relating to educational inclusion¹ are high on the agenda of the school. This was evidently not the case at the time of the 1996 inspection, as many pupils then got a raw deal and did not achieve their potential where standards, behaviour, relationships and personal development were concerned. In some of these aspects, inspectors judged that those in school knew little about their pupils. Recognising this situation, the then new headteacher resolved to put matters right. She has done this with outstanding success. Today, pupils of all races, faiths and social backgrounds are valued for what they are and what they achieve. The headteacher has restored the heart of the school.
46. Central to this is the monitoring of opportunities. Racial intolerance, prejudice and hostility are not tolerated. Any incident is picked up very quickly and dealt with determinedly. Inspectors frequently wrote that pupils show excellent levels of racial harmony and that the school is a model for others to aspire to. The monitoring of factors relating to ethnic origin extends to some good practice in evaluating the standards and progress of different sub sections of the school population. Additionally, the provision of a well balanced ethnic mix amongst the staff leads to the provision of excellent role

¹ Educational inclusion concerns the way that the school provides every opportunity for all pupils, regardless of background, to do well in school. A key element is the degree to which there is racial harmony.

models and the careful analysis of teaching styles and resources, especially books, shows every pupil that s/he can aspire to good things in life.

47. Teachers try to identify pupils who are likely to experience learning difficulties at the earliest opportunity. The teachers in the nursery class observe the children closely, and after a suitable settling in period use the simple nursery tests to group children. After this pupils are monitored regularly to see if they have made sufficient progress to come off the register, or if they need further help. The school draws on the expertise of specialist services for more detailed diagnostic testing. The school has very good relationships with many specialist agencies, and particularly values the links with the People and Pupil Support Service. The school uses its knowledge of its special educational pupils effectively to give guidance on behaviour and academic improvement. The pupils are well prepared for their transfer to secondary school. The school is able to meet the support terms written into the five statements of special educational need.
48. In 1996 some pupils avoided coming to school. As part of its very good programme of improvement since then, the school has established good procedures to encourage high attendance levels and punctuality. Regular awards are made good attendance and pupils strive to be present even when their parents think they would be best at home whilst they recover from illness! Attendance rates are now better than are usually found.
49. When pupils got to school in 1996, many were not well behaved. Again, the system of rewards for good behaviour have been perfected over the last four years and now, pupils take great pleasure from winning the behaviour awards established by the headteacher. The monitoring of behaviour is detailed and analytical and unwanted trends are spotted quickly and eradicated firmly. The same extends to bullying. None was noted during the inspection. Pupils and parents say that occurrences are rare and that the school takes highly effective steps to stop bullying in its tracks.
50. The monitoring of the standards achieved and the progress made in learning is a relative shortcoming. Again, in 1996 it was an out and out weakness. Good progress has been made to introduce a systematic system of assessment in English and mathematics. The evidence available so far, shows this to be rather more successful in mathematics than English. The headteacher and key managers monitor the outcomes of SATs and other tests and set challenging targets for each year group. Other staff have less involvement in this part of the process and the targets set are not always carried through into the planning of lessons, the setting, sharing and joint evaluation of targets for individual lessons with the pupils, or in marking work to show how it can be improved. The improvement in assessment has not yet been extended to other subjects and so the means to monitor and support pupils' progress are not complete.
51. All staff know the pupils really well. This is a singular strength. The adults in school are very responsive to the personal development of their pupils and they log how well they mature into pleasant individuals very carefully. The establishment of a school council and of a system of peer group mentoring to help bring even better behaviour are two examples of the way in which the school has taken the need for growth in personal responsibility and maturity very seriously.
52. Matters relating to health and safety in school, child protection and general issues of pupils' welfare are also taken seriously and dealt with effectively. It is a safe and welcoming place where pupils are happy and content, and are at ease with other people, no matter what their age, gender, ethnic origin, faith or social background. The school does a very effective job where educational inclusion is concerned.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Satisfactorily.

- ❑ The relationship with parents is improving and supports pupils' learning effectively.
- ❑ Parents think the school is doing a good job and they feel welcome in school.
- ❑ Some information provided for parents could be improved.

53. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was encouraging a partnership with parents but not meeting with much success. A minority of parents was reported as finding the school difficult to approach. Today, most parents are supportive of the school and the work of the staff in creating a safe and caring environment for their children. Parents told inspectors that the headteacher and staff make themselves readily available if parents have concerns and that all are very approachable. Consequently relationships and communication with parents is now good. There are two areas that parents have concerns about – the inconsistent way that homework is set and the narrow range of extra-curricular opportunities. The inspection team judges that these are both satisfactory. Parents welcome the emphasis that the school is giving to promoting strategies to involve them as co-educators of their children, for example the *School Wise* initiative.
54. The school promotes an *open-door* policy that welcomes parents and visitors warmly. There is an *early partnership* approach to education. The parents or carers of each child in reception are invited into school to discuss ways to help them settle and do well. This is effective and popular. A home-school agreement in place since 1999, has been well received by parents, and is a positive feature in securing the on-going partnership. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in the process of providing appropriate support for their children and are kept well informed of the progress made. The school uses some of its additional funding to employ a part *time Parent Partnership worker*. This is helpful in establishing effective links with parents.
55. Communication between school and home is supported by informative newsletters of good quality. These include details of staff absence and other changes in school, and are successful in keeping a steady flow of information. There are three opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress throughout the year with an annual report in the summer term. Parents find this good practice extremely useful in letting them know how their child is getting on at school. The governors' annual report to parents is written in a lively style, is easy to follow and includes all required information. However, the prospectus is not as user-friendly. The school clearly has the confidence of parents and the multi-cultural community it serves.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Very well

- The headteacher is the key to the successes of the school and leads it with excellence.
- Other staff take up their management duties very well and there is a strong sense of shared commitment to high standards.
- Governors have firm grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and they carry out their duties well.
- Key managers know individual pupils' achievements well and they ensure that very good quality teaching ensures that all pupils make good progress and that standards are very good.
- Other managers could be drawn into the process of checking and evaluating standards, teaching and learning more than they are.
- Money and other resources are put to effective use to provide a good education for the pupils, though the school spends more money than it earns.
- There are no shortages of books or most resources and staffing levels are good.
- The weaknesses in leadership and management identified in previous inspection reports have been tackled very successfully.
- The school gives satisfactory value for money and it fulfils the principles of best value effectively.

56. The headteacher provides excellent leadership aimed at improving the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of education provided by the school. The leadership has led the school out of the period when it required special measures to improve and into the current phase where the school provides an effective education and has many strengths. The aims of the school to develop all its pupils while valuing them and their various cultures are realised through the creation of a caring and challenging ethos. The management and improvement of behaviour has been a major aim of the school community that has been achieved through the commitment of the whole school community. (from the cook to the headteacher).
57. The senior management team is beginning to play an important part in strategic planning and decision making. This sharing of responsibility is a healthy development that allows staff to use and develop their talents for the common good. The delegation of responsibility to subject coordinators does not as yet include the monitoring of planning and work in the classroom. This is the next step that will include all teaching staff, involving them in the collective view of the standards achieved by the school.
58. The governing body has played its own part in improving St. Mary's. The important weaknesses that were identified at the time of the last inspection have been rectified. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have kept pace with the changing picture in recent years, adjusting to developments, changing priorities appropriately whilst providing solid support throughout. The governing body is not complacent with the improvements that have been made, it has clear ideas on how they need to develop, the need to set targets and monitor all aspects of school performance. The school development plan acts as a point of convergence for all of the elements of the management team. Its production and implementation involves the governors, senior management team and other staff. It has focused quite naturally on the present and near future, but from the security of the platform the school now has, the development plan can indulge in the luxury of a slightly longer perspective.
59. The coordination of special educational needs is very good, and has established effective and caring provision. This is a much stronger position than at the previous inspection, when the governors were said to be failing to implement the Code of Practice. The necessary work to ensure compliance with

the code has been done. The coordinator monitors the quality of the provision and upgrades it when there is reason to. For instance the school has stopped using the classroom support assistants to take small groups out of the classroom. Now the support is delivered within the classroom. The inspection findings confirm that this is a particularly effective strategy, because the pupils feel that they are part of everything that goes on in the room, and are not excluded from the feeling of good will and cohesion which exists in most classes. The coordinator has developed in staff a purposeful, determined yet cheerful commitment to secure the progress of pupils with special educational needs. The expertise of the support staff has fed into the management process in a particularly valuable way. This aspect of the school's spending represents good value for money.

60. The school makes appropriate assessment of pupils who join the school after the reception year. This enables staff to make proper provision for their needs and the pupils to settle into new routines and experiences as quickly as possible. However, the high mobility factor amongst pupils means that many do not immediately reach their potential, because the interruption to learning affects their progress.
61. The school's performance in identifying priorities such as behaviour, standards in core subjects, and the action it has taken to improve them, have been excellent; it has been both coherent and effective.
62. Arrangements for the performance management of teaching staff have been based on the good monitoring activities of the headteacher. There is clear evidence that this monitoring has led to improved teaching and learning and that it has played a significant part in the overall improvement of the school. Staff have responded positively to this scrutiny, very good relationships and a team approach are strengths of the school. The induction of new staff and new entrants to the profession is handled very well so that they soon become part of the whole school team and are able to make their individual contribution. The contribution made by classroom assistants is excellent, their support of pupils makes teaching and learning very effective; they know how and when to intervene and are very well prepared for their work. Other adults in school play an important role too, there is a common purpose to give of their the best for the pupils whether this is the food served at lunch time or the activities provided in the *Before and After School Care provision*.
63. Educational priorities are supported through careful financial planning. Despite this, the school has spent more than its income in recent years and, as such, it has a deficit budget. The school and local education authority are very aware that the situation needs careful attention, and that annual overspends cannot continue indefinitely. The balancing of the budget has been made very difficult in recent years by well above average costs for the cover of staff illness. Day to day administration is efficient and effective, there is clear indication of responsibility and good systems are in place that have responded well to the latest audit recommendations. The school pays for additional financial support from the local authority that assists in the good management of finances. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money.
64. The accommodation is adequate in size, it is kept and maintained to a high standard. However its impact on the visitor is immediate because of the very high standards of stimulating displays. Very little is wrong with the accommodation except in the kitchen area where the peeling paint does not reflect the pride and professionalism of the staff who work in it. Resources are at least satisfactory in all subjects and support teaching well; this is another improvement from the time of the last inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65. St Mary's Church of England Primary School has improved enormously since the last inspection when it was judged to be failing its pupils. All the staff, led by the outstanding headteacher, have pulled together to make things better for the pupils. The positive results

are set out in this inspection report. There are now three main areas for further improvement, but all adults in school have the skills, knowledge and commitment necessary for success. In order to go for gold, the school should:

(1) Continue to raise standards in English, mathematics, science, geography, history and ICT.

by:

- Improving the range and quality of writing across the curriculum in all years.
- Updating the policy for English, giving due emphasis to speaking and listening.
- Boosting coverage of space and measures in mathematics.
- Ensuring there is consistency of experience in science.
- Exploiting all opportunities for independent scientific investigation, prediction and testing.
- Promoting geography and history as much as other subjects in the curriculum.
- Developing a secure strategy to bring wider coverage of ICT.
- Giving pupils more regular and frequent chances to use ICT across the curriculum.

See paragraphs: 5, 12, 81-97, 98-103, 104-107 and 119-123.

(2) Improve assessment procedures and make better use of the information produced to set even more sharply focused targets for learning.

by:

- Broadening assessment to cover all subjects outside English and mathematics.
- Using the results of assessment to set more specific targets for learning.
- Stating learning objectives more precisely in planning.
- Sharing and reviewing with pupils, targets for the knowledge, skills and understanding to be learned in lessons.
- Using marking to show pupils how they can improve their work.
- Sharing the outcomes of assessment and targets for learning more with parents.
- Levelling work in portfolios of pupils' work.

See paragraphs: 6, 12, 29, 32, 50, 58, 70, 95, 96, 102, 107, 112, 117, 141 and 147.

(3) Involve subject coordinators more in checking and evaluating standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

by:

- Extending and developing the management role of coordinators.
- Giving coordinators shared responsibility for the monitoring of planning to ensure the best curriculum balance.
- Developing a programme of monitoring of pupils' work in books.
- Enhancing their role in monitoring standards and the quality of teaching and learning in other classes.
- Sharing the undoubted good practice in teaching and learning more widely.

See paragraphs: 12, 35, 50, 57, 58, 117, 128 and 141.

An additional, less substantive issue that the governing body should include in their action plan:

Combine the best practice found in the nursery, with that in reception classes to develop high quality early years provision.

See paragraphs: 66–80.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	16

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	23	51	23	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	260
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		88

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	85

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	230

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.2
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	18	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	10	15
	Girls	11	11	12
	Total	23	21	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	64 (77)	58 (86)	75 (80)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	15	15
	Girls	12	12	10
	Total	24	27	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67 (80)	75 (74)	69 (86)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	17	22

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	14	13
	Girls	16	15	17
	Total	28	29	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	72 (66)	74 (52)	77 (59)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	11	10
	Girls	7	10	7
	Total	15	21	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	41 (31)	57 (59)	46 (59)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	119
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	70
Pakistani	36
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	10
Any other minority ethnic group	25

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.6
Average class size	26.0

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	166

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	31.25

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6.6
--------------------------------	-----

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	609 649
Total expenditure	666 040
Expenditure per pupil	2 321
Balance brought forward from previous year	-35 625
Balance carried forward to next year	-92 016

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	285
Number of questionnaires returned	41

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My Child likes school	71	29	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school	46	46	0	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good	59	41	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	27	32	24	15	2
The teaching is good	59	41	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	37	51	10	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	73	27	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	56	41	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents	39	54	2	2	2
The school is well led and managed	63	32	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	44	56	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	32	37	20	0	12

The results of the questionnaire were positive; parents are pleased that they chose St Mary's Church of England Primary School for their children and they say that it is a much-improved place. The inspection team agrees with these judgements.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- ❑ Children have below the expected level of knowledge and skill when they start school.
- ❑ Good progress is made because children settle happily and have a good curriculum.
- ❑ Good teaching and learning takes place.
- ❑ Many children achieve the Early Learning Goals at the end of the Foundation Stage.
- ❑ Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships amongst the children.
- ❑ There is now a need to weld together the best practice of the nursery and reception classes in order to develop early years provision that is second-to-none.

66. The provision for children under five is good overall in both the nursery and reception classes. Children are given a positive start to their education. The purpose built nursery has places for twenty-six three and four year olds attending on a part time basis. Children join the reception classes in the September prior to their fifth birthday. At the time of the inspection there were twenty-two children attending part time in the nursery and forty-five children full time in the reception classes. Good induction procedures ensure a smooth start is made. Children enter the nursery with a wide range of skills nevertheless; on the whole, standards on entry are below nationally expected levels. Standards are low in their language, literacy and communication skills and in personal and social development. At first many children are reluctant to join in activities and need a great deal of help, and a significant proportion whose home language is not English still mainly use their home language. The skilful support the children receive enables them to make satisfactory, and often good, progress in all the defined areas of learning. By the time they leave the nursery, most children are on course to reach standards close to those expected. On leaving the nursery only half their number transfer directly into the school.
67. The provision in the reception classes builds very successfully on the good start made in the nursery. More than half the children entering full time education have received little or no pre-school education, therefore overall attainment on entry is below average. Two class teachers, who are ably supported by additional classroom support assistants, teach the children in the reception classes. Most children are making good and sometimes very good progress. The system of holding discussions with parents and carers at the start of the reception year helps the children adjust well to school life and to make good progress.
68. Teaching is good overall and, in the lessons observed, the quality of teaching is always good with a higher proportion of very good and excellent lessons observed in the reception classes. All teachers have high expectations and teaching is well matched to children's different stages of development. Teachers and nursery nurses and other support staff work very well within established routines and ensure children have equal access to all activities and a broad and balanced range of subjects. Regular observations whilst children work and play, particularly in the reception classes, ensure that planned work successfully meets the children's developing needs. Sound records are kept of pupils' progress.
69. Children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language are supported well and make good progress similar to other pupils. Parents and carers find the nursery and reception classes a welcoming environment and they are pleased with the information provided for them throughout the year.
70. The school is aware of the need to develop a greater partnership between the nursery and reception classes that will continue the joint planning approach to include more detailed assessments of

children's progress. The sharing of baseline assessment findings with parents will enable greater support from home to promote accelerated learning. There is now a need to bring together the best practice found in the nursery and the reception classes to create early year provision that is fully a strength of the school.

Personal, social and emotional development

71. Children in both the nursery and reception classes make good progress overall in their personal and social development. Teaching in this area of learning is good in the nursery and very good in the reception classes. The pattern of the nursery day encourages children to talk and play in small groups. Well-structured activities provide children with many opportunities for sharing and taking turns and, where there is adult support, children co-operate very well. In the reception classes, children have much more independence. They move from teacher-directed to independent activities easily, and concentrate and persevere at tasks. They relate well towards adults and each other as observed during the taking of turns operating the model railway on the carpet. Children display a willingness to co-operate and are keen to share ideas and views. Children in the nursery and reception classes understand what is right and wrong and respond very well to their teachers when they reinforce these areas. All the children know and accept the established rules and procedures of the class.
72. All children are keen to learn and show very good interest in everything around them, including talking to visitors during the inspection week. They dress themselves for outdoor play and physical education lessons, managing much of this unaided. Staff work very well together to ensure that all of the children feel safe and secure. Expectations of very good behaviour are consistently enforced in an encouraging manner. Children respond to this positively and their behaviour on the whole is very good, with some examples of excellent behaviour observed during the inspection. The school has improved the provision for children under fives that was noted in the previous inspection report. Most children achieve the early learning goals in this area by the time they are five.

Communication, language and literacy

73. A very high priority is given to communication, language and literacy skills and most children make good progress in the nursery and very good progress in the reception classes. In the nursery children show growing confidence in speaking to each other and to adults, but need guidance and sensitive questioning to encourage them to talk during the sharing of stories in the 'big book'. Most answers are just one word but children are keen to tackle new vocabulary until they are confident in its use. In the reception classes children are beginning to communicate with each other in imaginative play for example booking a holiday in the travel agent's shop after viewing various brochures. Children's listening skills are better than speaking skills during literacy sessions.
74. Teaching during literacy lessons is good. Stories shared with children are of a high quality and make a strong contribution to their normal development. Children handle books with care and attention and in the nursery children know that pictures as well as words tell the story and they are familiar with some letter sounds as part of their planned activities. This is further developed in the reception classes and, by the time they are five, most children know a range of phrases and use picture clues to predict the plot in the story. They talk enthusiastically about characters and the brighter children are beginning to read well using illustrations to represent their own writing, discussing what is happening and what might happen next. In the reception classes reading skills are taught in a structured manner with parts of the literacy hour strategy taught well. Children are given books to take home to share with their parents. Learning targets in the reception classes are clear and concise, supporting rapid progress for most children.
75. Nursery children enjoy mark making and basic writing experiences as their control over pencils, crayons and paintbrushes develops. In the reception classes children are aware of some of the

purposes for writing, such as making lists, and move from random mark making to the use of familiar pictures, letters and words to communicate their thoughts and ideas. All children in both nursery and reception classes have memorised and sing a range of action songs and rhymes, for example, dressing up as a frog before disappearing into the 'pool' when their numbered turn comes around. Most children achieve the early learning goals in this area by the time they are five.

Mathematical development

76. Early years teaching in mathematics is good overall with some very good and excellent features observed in the reception classes. In the nursery children recognise a range of shapes and colours, sort, match and compare a range of objects and recognise and name bigger and smaller objects. Children match plastic beakers with the appropriate number as observed during the activity involving children writing a given number (up to five) then carrying the corresponding number of empty beakers from one table to another using simple signs and actions for 'adding on' and 'equals to'. Children in the nursery learn a good range of action number rhymes, songs and counting games that reinforces good learning.
77. In the reception classes children have secure knowledge of numbers to ten and a significant majority count up to twenty and confidently use the number line. The brighter children order numbers such as 13, 15, and 17 indicating the smallest and largest and understand 'bigger than' and 'smaller than'. Children develop their mathematical vocabulary during practical activities. A very strong feature of learning observed in the reception classes is the element of independent activities with children undertaking a range of well prepared, highly stimulating tasks considering number sequences up to twenty. Children make good progress in the nursery and reception classes and most achieve the early learning goals in mathematical development by the time they are five.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

78. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is provided through early science, technology, history and geography. As a result of watching bulbs grow they are aware of the best conditions needed for growth. Visits to places of local interest and visitors to the nursery and reception classes help children develop awareness of different roles in society. They understand the differences between everyday materials and that some float and others sink when water is absorbed. Children understand the use of a variety of information sources such as books, television and computers and, with support, are developing good control over the use of the computer mouse. Children in both nursery and reception class learn that the passage of time affects everyone by studying themselves and their families looking at photographs of themselves as babies and comparing them with what they look like today. Children in the nursery successfully link the need to use binoculars when looking at things a long way away. In the reception class children point the mouse at the 'start' button, find the program and start playing a range of matching games and a few 'close down' appropriately. Children can type their names correctly for use on a label to accompany displayed work. In the nursery and reception classes the good quality of teachers' questions consistently requires thoughtfully constructed answers. In the reception classes single word answers are often challenged by further questions. Adult discussions with children continually stimulate ideas. Teaching is often of good quality in the nursery and reception classes. Most children achieve the early learning goals in their knowledge and understanding of the world by the time they are five.

Physical development

79. Through the planned use of the hall and outside play areas, children's physical development is steadily improved. All children and staff change into suitable clothing for work at floor level and, at the end of activities in the hall, most children in the reception classes dress themselves. The nursery teacher successfully encourages the development of independent skills when children are changing for

these activities. In the school hall children from the reception classes use space well, walking, running, jumping and hopping with good control. Due to good teaching, children are very well behaved, listening and responding very carefully to instructions. Teaching in this area is good. Children in the nursery use a range of small and large equipment with increasing control and confidence during outside play. They are aware of the space around them and manoeuvre large tricycles on the marked track with appropriate speed. Children change direction to avoid collisions and stop with good control. The school is aware of the need to develop the level of challenge by more clearly focusing activities on children's needs. Children's control over paintbrushes, pencils and other marking tools is also developing well and most children cut out accurately with scissors. In both the nursery and reception classes children make good progress and most achieve their early learning goals in physical development by the time they are five.

Creative development

80. A strength of the nursery and reception classes is the high quality of displays that successfully promote children's creative work. Good teaching and planning including structured role-play ensures all children in the nursery and reception classes make good and sometimes very good progress. Children in the nursery have good opportunities for using colours, for example white and red to make pink. Children make careful choices about colour and materials. They cut and stick, roll and manipulate play dough and clay, use construction kits to plan railway layouts, placing bridges in the correct position, carrying out these tasks with great enjoyment. In musical activities children clap to a steady beat and choose an instrument to play. They are beginning to know the different sounds they make. In the reception classes children successfully build effectively on these skills of listening and playing. Many planned activities have good links with other subjects and knowledge and understanding in all areas is frequently consolidated in art and craft activities. By the time children are five most children have attained their early learning goals in this area of learning.

ENGLISH

- ❑ Satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.
- ❑ Standards in writing are still a central priority for improvement.
- ❑ Satisfactory standards at age 11 but not yet as strong at age 7.
- ❑ Girls do rather better than the boys in the infant classes, but boys catch up well in the juniors.
- ❑ Good progress.
- ❑ Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in lessons.
- ❑ Good teaching and learning.
- ❑ Satisfactory curriculum and the literacy hour has had good impact on standards and progress.
- ❑ Assessment is improved but there are still inconsistencies.
- ❑ Good leadership and management of English with firm commitment to improvement.

81. There have been steady improvements in standards of eleven-year-old pupils in the SATs over the past few years. In 2000, the results of Year 6 pupils were *below* the national average, a rise from *well below average* in previous years. Compared to pupils in schools with a high proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, standards were above average. Standards in SATs have not improved to the same extent in the infants, where standards achieved were well below the national average in 2000. Key factors in the that affect pattern of standards include:
- The starting point of pupils is well below what is expected.
 - A large proportion of pupils do not complete the full seven years at school.
 - Ninety per cent of all pupils come from homes where English is not the first language.
 - An above average proportion of pupils has special educational needs in aspects of literacy
82. Boys and girls demonstrate an equal interest in the subject and show very positive attitudes to learning. During the past four years infant boys have not done as well as the infant girls in the SATs. School managers are aware of the need for further improvement in the attainment of boys and are working successfully to promote this in infant classes. The junior boys now close the gap effectively by the age of eleven.
83. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 2 pupils are achieving standards below national expectations. However, in Year 6 pupils are achieving standards broadly in line with national averages. The school has successfully placed a strong focus on raising standards in literacy over the last year and this has helped pupils to raise their standards of achievement, especially in writing, by the end of Year 6. The school has made sound improvement since the previous inspection and pupils' progress is good overall. Nevertheless standards are not yet as high as they could be.
84. Pupils' speaking skills are below national expectations in the reception classes. Above average attaining pupils have sound speaking skills and apply their language skills to offer simple explanations and to discuss the stories and characters in their reading books. They also speak fluently with good articulation and listen carefully to questions and answers. From Year 4 onward, standards of attainment in speaking and listening improve, pupils speak clearly and are very keen to contribute to class discussions using a range of vocabulary. Year 6 pupils are very confident, presenting ideas convincingly during a class debate relating to the advantages and disadvantages of cloning. Very good cross-curricular links with music appropriately target the improvement in pupils' listening skills.
85. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils' standards in reading are in line with the national average. Above average and most average attaining pupils attain a sound standard in developing strategies to extend their reading skills. In Year 2, pupils learn to read a range of texts and develop sound comprehension skills. Pupils are able to self-correct when they make errors. Higher attaining pupils read with expression, paying attention to full stops and question marks. Pupils experiencing

difficulties with their reading are well supported to improve their understanding of phonics and pictorial clues.

86. In some lower junior classes average and below average attaining pupils are still achieving levels below those expected. Inspectors judged that, from listening to a wide sample of readers, books were not as well matched to the needs of pupils in one or two cases. The match of reading books to attainment levels is something that the school takes seriously and is working hard to improve. There are reading areas in all classrooms that encourage pupils to read for enjoyment and understanding. In addition, the class learning centres are used well to promote literacy skills. The headteacher is adamant that literacy is the number one priority of the school and has ensured that all staff join her in the effective promotion of reading skills. All pupils are heard read frequently in school and are generally well supported by parents. Pupils throughout the school read with obvious enjoyment and their reading covers a range of texts including fiction, poetry, non-fiction and a range of classical plays, in addition to those of the school's selected reading scheme.
87. In Year 5, reading skills improve with more effective use of phonic strategies to decipher difficult words. In Year 6, most pupils are fluent readers reading with great understanding. Above average and most average attaining pupils in Year 6 read independently and show greater confidence in discussing favourite authors and characters. There are appropriate planned opportunities for pupils to develop their research skills in the school library. Most pupils have a secure understanding of library skills, knowing how to find particular books, and explaining the purpose of an index and glossary. They are aware of the differences between works of fiction and non-fiction.
88. Pupils in Year 1 achieve standards below national averages in writing. They do not yet have sufficient experience to plan and produce a range of extended writing to secure their skills to write confidently for different audiences. Above average attaining pupils in Year 1 are writing sentences by themselves. However, they could be given more opportunities to develop their skills by producing a wider range of work. In Year 2, most pupils record information appropriately in different forms. Above average and average attaining pupils form their letters appropriately and use basic punctuation correctly, starting sentences with capital letters and finishing with a full stop. Above average attaining pupils have a sound awareness of sequencing and write simple stories. Nevertheless, scrutiny of work in pupils' books and in displays shows that their use of joined script is ripe for improvement.
89. Pupils have a more secure understanding of grammatical structures and write in the appropriate style for some purposes, such as instruction writing. The school's focus on the development of extended writing skills in Years 5 and 6 has had a positive effect. By the end of Year 5, standards are broadly average and pupils have a good understanding of how to plan their writing. They are aware of the need for paragraphs and accurate punctuation, making good efforts to use vocabulary in a more interesting way. The strong emphasis on planning, drafting and redrafting work ensures that pupils use the writing targets they are set in lessons to raise standards in Year 6. However the good quality joined writing evident in Year 5/6 is not as marked in Year 6 and handwriting is not developed consistently throughout the school. There was not much use of ICT to assist learning during the inspection. The coordinators accept that planning to include the use of ICT is a priority, and are working hard to implement this.
90. Pupils with special educational needs who are experiencing difficulties with their learning are well provided with suitably adapted work to build up their confidence to tackle areas of weakness. Pupils who have English as an additional language are well supported and they make good progress in developing language and literacy skills. Teachers and support staff know these pupils well and their special educational needs are well defined and individually targeted in lessons.

91. Pupils are very well behaved and excellent relationships exist between all teaching staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. In all classes pupils listen very attentively, for example when their class teacher is reading from the 'Big Book', and they maintain keen interest throughout the lesson, responding well to teachers' questioning. Pupils are able to concentrate when working independently and work well co-operatively in pairs and groups. During the literacy hour, pupils throughout the school are eager to share their opinions on the meaning of the shared text.
92. The quality of teaching is good overall with some that is very good. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. For example, in a very good Year 4 lesson, pupils consolidated their week's work by confidently using imaginary words to illustrate a given text like a sales brochure for a house sale. Every pupil achieved the objective through the teacher's carefully planned lesson incorporating a range of appropriate activities and clearly explained expectations. Year 5 pupils made very good learning gains developing a discussion and in their written work reflecting an argument against cloning. Skilful teaching enables pupils to organise arguments coherently, using complex sentences and extended speaking opportunities. The pace of the planned arguments puts pressure on the pupils to respond and to think quickly and thoughtfully. All the teaching observed in Year 5 and in the Year 5/6 class was very good, capturing pupils' interest through challenging tasks and ensuring that pupils made very good gains in their learning. The content of these lessons includes an effective use of resources, for example pupils having their own individual whiteboards for writing down their own sentences. This requires the pupil to write the sentence and speak clearly when sharing its content, thus providing an opportunity for structured handwriting practice.
93. There are one or two aspects of teaching, that whilst satisfactory, could be improved even more. In lessons that are less effective, opportunities for pupils to learn from the text are sometimes missed, teachers' subject knowledge is occasionally insecure, time is not always well managed and some activities are not as well matched to the needs of the pupils. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are also taught well and given good opportunities to develop and improve their language skills alongside the other pupils in their class.
94. The school recognises the need to update the English policy and draw up a scheme of work for speaking and listening. The National Literacy Strategy is successfully in place through the school, though in some classes the progress of all groups is not as consistent as it might be. The literacy strategy is well promoted in other subjects. Classroom assistants support groups very effectively. Currently pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are benefiting from additional teacher time and this is leading to improved rates of progress in lessons. The classes held to boost attainment in literacy are also proving successful and standards are rising as a result.
95. The SATs are effectively carried out in Years 2 and 6, and the school also undertakes standardised tests in other years. Managers have started to analyse effectively the information gained from tests, using the outcome to set challenging targets. As yet, there is no set record to assess pupils' skills in speaking and listening. Reading records for group reading are being appropriately developed, but the records for individuals in some instances are not detailed enough. Most give basic information about books read but not all contain detailed analysis of how reading could be improved.
96. The school is aware of the need to develop a portfolio of levelled and annotated written work so that teachers are aware of National Curriculum levels achieved by their pupils in order to give pupils clear guidance towards the next step forward in their learning. The headteacher monitors pupil' work and marking well. However, the use of marking to identify what needs to be done next in order to improve could be more consistent. The planning and high profile given to the subject by the senior management team and the school development plan are having a positive effect on moving the school forward to achieve higher standards. The subject is well resourced with considerable investment over

the last three years in new fiction and non-fiction books for the library and classrooms and sets of shared reading texts to support the literacy hour.

97. The subject is well led by two newly appointed co-ordinators that have identified areas for improvement and developed a clear and appropriate action plan. They have very good subject knowledge and understanding that successfully underpins their shared commitment to raising standards in English.

MATHEMATICS

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Good improvement since the previous inspection.<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory standards.<input type="checkbox"/> Good progress.<input type="checkbox"/> Very good attitudes and relationships in lessons with good behaviour.<input type="checkbox"/> Good teaching and learning.<input type="checkbox"/> Use of assessment could be sharper.<input type="checkbox"/> Good curriculum with good impact on standards from the numeracy hour.<input type="checkbox"/> Good leadership and management in mathematics. |
|---|
98. Inspection findings show that standards are in line with the national averages for pupils aged seven and eleven. After some years of standards being well below average in the Year 6 SATs, the results for 2000 showed what pupils could do. The proportion of pupils achieving level 4 was similar to the national average, and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level 5 exceeded the national figure slightly. The pupils did better than when they were in Year 2. These results are considerably better than the average achieved by schools of similar background. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection, and is largely because the school has introduced the numeracy strategy well. It is also because the coordinator is monitoring the lessons to ensure that the school is now teaching mathematics in a consistent way throughout all years. Year 6 pupils are quick with number in mental tests, and are good at working things out using their own strategies to get to the answers to problems. They are not quite as capable at understanding elements of shape and space, such as all the symmetries of two-dimensional shapes or the accurate measurement of angles.
99. Standards by the end of Year 2 are also close to the national average. This is an improvement on both the previous inspection and the results of the 2000 SATs. After some years of average results, this performance was a disappointment. The expected number of pupils did not reach the higher level 3, and a larger than expected number remained on level 1. The coordinator has studied the results closely. Several factors are involved; the number of pupils joining and leaving the class during the year, the number of pupils who had special educational needs and a disturbance in the stability of teaching over that period. Standards are higher this year because the strategies the coordinator put in place have been effective. More support from classroom assistants has been targeted at the level 1 group of pupils, and this has boosted many of them up to level 2c. More attention has been paid to the work pupils found difficult last year, for instance, their awareness in using money. The teachers match the work more closely to pupils' abilities, which means that all pupils are challenged to do their best. This is evident in pupils' books, consistently through the year. Lower attaining pupils work competently on smaller numbers while higher attainers wrestle with large numbers, but there is scope for extending the range of experiences for this higher achieving group.
100. Pupils' progress through the infants and juniors is good and it is much improved on the previous inspection. This is linked to the good teaching. Teachers create good learning conditions. They start the lessons with lively mental arithmetic sessions. They expect the pupils to think really hard not only about what they are doing but also about how they are going to tackle the problems. So Year 2 pupils working on subtraction, partitioning numbers and using the inverse rule had to think just as clearly as Year 6 pupils working out the relationship of a circle's circumference and diameter. Strong features

in the teaching are the way the teachers encourage pupils to decide on their own way of recording work. For instance the Year 6 girl who said *I'm going to do mine as a chart* showed that she understood the need for recording work in a structured way. Another strength lies in teachers getting pupils to put their thoughts into words. This is working well in Year 4, 5 and 6, with pupils beginning to use technical terms confidently. Year 4's lesson on shape was flowing with the vocabulary of vertices, rhombus, trapezia and parallelograms. This kind of teaching promotes progress through pupils' reasoning. The phrase *It must be because...* was frequently heard. The focus on language is particularly useful for pupils who have English as an additional language.

101. The use of extended language is still a difficulty for Year 3 pupils, who struggled to find the words they needed to describe the connection between the types of measuring equipment they had sorted into groups. This activity, however, was typical of the care that the teachers take to use, and have ready, practical apparatus to give the pupils the hands-on experience from which they learn most directly. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is nearly always good, often very good and at times excellent. They work well with partners or in small groups, bouncing ideas off each other. They are usually too busy to think of mischief, although some of the Year 1 pupils are still unsettled and learning conditions can be a bit tense. The presentation of pupils' work is much better than found during the previous inspection. The display of mathematics work around the school is very good, and it is often used in lessons for teaching points, thus aiding pupils' memory of past learning.
102. One weaker aspect in teaching is the use of assessment. While tracking pupils' progress is well developed in mathematics to tell teachers where to target particular support and attention, occasionally in lessons it does not work as effectively. For instance the Year 2 subtraction lesson relied on number bonds being known better than they were. Or a Year 5 lesson, though exciting and relevant, needed pupils to be stronger at measuring angles than they were. ICT is beginning to be used effectively to help pupils learn particular aspects, such as the properties of shapes or routes in a maze.
103. Mathematics is well led and managed and this has led to good rates of improvement in the subject.

SCIENCE

- Good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Satisfactory standards.
- Good progress.
- Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in lessons.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Satisfactory curriculum but practical investigation and problem solving needs promoting more.
- Planning, assessment and evaluation have shortcomings.
- Effective leadership and management of science, though the coordinator has not yet had the opportunity to monitor work across the school.

104. Standards in science at the time of the last inspection were judged to be in line with national averages at the end of Year 2, and these standards have been maintained. By the end of Year 6, standards were judged to be below average. Since that time, SATs results have shown a continuous rise year on year at a greater pace than the national trend. If this improvement continues it is clear that St Mary's will reach the average for schools nationally and certainly be in line with or exceed the average of schools deemed to be of a similar intake of pupils. Observations throughout the inspection support these levels of attainment and it was noted that more able pupils were being well challenged in some lessons.
105. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 cover the same topics as part of the two-year cycle. They learn about healthy foods and what living things need to survive. In both year groups pupils experiment with a range of fabrics to see how successfully they keep things warm. This requires the pupils to use thermometers and to record results in a table developing good skills and awareness of science as a discipline. A look

at the pupils' books reveals very clearly the greater demand made on Year 2 pupils and demonstrates the sound progress they make through the infants. In Years 3 and 4 pupils build simple electrical circuits using various components such as lamps and switches, they also look at the process of dissolving. In some topics there is little depth of study and the potential to develop investigations from earlier findings are not followed through sufficiently, so that progress is only just satisfactory. In Years 5 and 6 pupils take their studies into electricity further, building series and parallel circuits. Later work looks at the nature of materials their physical state and how they can be separated using techniques such as filtration. Again there are times when topics are not exploited to their full as a means of developing and employing scientific skills such as measuring, planning, recording and evaluating their results. Pupils' science books have quite significant periods when nothing has been recorded in them and the way the same topic is covered is better in some classes than others. This suggests that teachers need to plan and then evaluate their work more closely on occasions.

106. The teaching observed during the inspection was good and some excellent teaching was observed. Teachers are confident in their approach to science, they have a mastery of the vocabulary and the concepts they are teaching. Organisation is good and they reveal a good insight into just how to stimulate their pupils. For instance in Year 4, pupils cause milk to separate using lemon juice. They discuss the change from liquid to solid and the irreversibility of the change before going on to flavour the resulting curds and testing them. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are set the problem of separating mixture of large soda crystals, rice, sugar crystals and talc. The activity is an excellent choice and the pupils respond in kind, thinking, testing, experimenting and adjusting their ideas and trials. Such lessons reflect the best of learning in science. In one class the pupils dispensed with the filter paper that had talc on it, keeping the sugar solution for evaporation and reclamation of the sugar itself. Then: *We have just destroyed the evidence*, said one girl, *This is our investigation*, said another. *Quick get it out of the bin*, they all agreed! Such independence and wisdom is rare in pupils of this age.
107. Science is well led and managed and the coordinator has worked successfully to bring improvement to the subject. There are still things that remain for improvement: the curriculum needs to be reviewed so that planning and delivery of lessons becomes more consistent and teachers are provided with more guidance and support in emphasising the promotion of practical skills. Systems for evaluating teaching and learning need to be formalised using the skill of the coordinator. Methods for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress pupils can be further developed as can the use of ICT in science. However there has been considerable advancement in this subject and the school has recognised its importance by the allocation of funds for resources that are now satisfactory and the establishment of booster classes for older pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

- Good standards.
- Good progress.
- Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in lessons.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Good curriculum, though assessment requires considerable development.
- Effective leadership and management.

108. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection when standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 were judged to be unsatisfactory. Through the provision of worthwhile experiences all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are now enabled to make good progress in learning through the school during individual lessons and from one year to another. Pupils can evaluate their own work and actively support one another's learning.
109. Attainment and progress in the infants is good. Pupils use a wide range of media including imaginative, original designs created on computers. A display of self-portraits in a reception class

demonstrates effective links with the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum through work based on “We’ve been thinking about our family”. Progress over time is evident in examples of self-portraits in Year 2 where the use of mirrors has produced work of a very high standard. High quality observational paintings such as that of an owl in a reception class are creatively displayed along with “handprints in paint”. Similarly, appreciation and understanding of style and different art forms are evident as in Year 1 watercolours painted in the style of Cezanne. Links with other areas of the curriculum are clearly established, for example, a patchwork quilt that has been displayed to illustrate language work as a fundamental part of the project.

110. Attainment and progress are also good in junior classes. Again a wide range of media is used as shown by a very effective large jungle mural which involved the use of reference material to research shape, colour and texture. Imaginative displays of pupils’ work, linked to other areas of the curriculum, abound. For example a wall display of animal drawings which incorporated a *Did you know...?* set of lift-up flaps to encourage the observer to increase his or her knowledge about the animals featured in the display. Similarly clay models of scarabs linked to a project on Egypt could be explained and described clearly, with understanding by Year 5 pupils. Close attention to detail is also obvious in pupils’ work, especially in the observational drawings of shoes by Year 6; the copies by Years 5 and 6 of a portrait of Jeanne Hebut by Modigliani; and ink-blown ‘grasses’ against colour-wash backgrounds.
111. The pupils respond well to the range of opportunities provided for them in art and design lessons. Many are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy both doing and talking about their activities. Good social and personal development was observed during art and design lessons. The subject also provides opportunities for extending and enriching other areas of the curriculum particularly through the thoughtful planning of topic work. Teaching and learning are both good overall in art and design.
112. Despite her absence on maternity leave at the time of the inspection, there is evidence of valuable input by the subject co-ordinator and the subject is well led and managed. Planning is good and learning objectives are clear, though assessment would stand improvement. Teachers use a variety of media and subject material with confidence. They know what they are trying to achieve and communicate this well to the pupils. There is good intervention by both class teachers and classroom assistants and pupils’ learning is consolidated and extended by good use of questioning and evaluation of outcomes.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- Satisfactory standards by age 7, good by age 11.
- Good progress.
- Good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in lessons.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Appropriate curriculum, but little systematic assessment takes place.
- Effective leadership and management.

113. There has been a noticeable improvement in the provision of the subject and in the standards attained by pupils across the school since the last inspection. In the juniors this improvement has been significant and pupils now make good progress in learning year on year. Pupils can evaluate their own work and that of others in a constructive way that both supports their learning and enhances their personal and social development.
114. Attainment and progress in the infants is satisfactory building on some good work in reception where close links with language work are well established. There is evidence of some good progress; for example, in Year 2 where a project on clothes incorporates design comparisons between clothes from different countries covering a wide range of styles, materials and cultural backgrounds. In the same

year group, links with business and industry were clearly established in a food technology project on designing and making pizza.

115. Attainment and progress at the end of Year 6 is good and the subject is being effectively used to both inspire the pupils' creativity and to secure their learning in other areas of the curriculum, particularly basic skills. Projects are skilfully used to integrate pupils' learning from a variety of stimuli. For example, a project on umbrellas has incorporated studying existing designs, modifying pupils' own designs and making and evaluating for further improvement. Design links to the Millennium Dome and to cocktail sticks have extended and enriched the pupils' learning as has the fruit cocktail that the pupils designed, created, evaluated and enjoyed. Similar projects have brought together history, science and literacy in addition to aspects of cultural, personal and social education. Pupils' work is creatively displayed and in some cases staff have gone to great lengths to create a stimulating environment to enhance pupils' learning, for example, in a Year 5 class where a reading corner has been transformed into a Tudor house, complete with thatched roof.
116. Where teaching was observed, it ranged from satisfactory to very good. Teaching is good overall in junior classes and satisfactory in the infants. In general, lessons are well planned and thought out, and levels of challenge are appropriate for pupils of different abilities. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well supported in Years 3 to 6 because of the effective intervention of class teachers and classroom assistants alike.
117. Although there is no co-ordinator at present, teachers have collaborated to ensure continuous provision and there is evidence of support for one another through joint planning and the sharing of resources which are adequate. Because of this, the management of the subject is effective. A policy and scheme of work are in place but whilst the pupils in some classes do evaluate their own work, assessment is not yet consistently used throughout the school. Monitoring of the subject is currently the responsibility of the headteacher.
118. The policy refers to the subject as being cross-curricular and it is very effective in this respect. It also provides valuable opportunities to support pupils' personal and social development and to enhance their understanding and appreciation of different cultures. The response of the pupils to the subject is good overall and at times excellent, particularly in lessons where the degree of challenge is high and matched to pupils' differing levels of ability.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

- Below average standards in both subjects.
- Good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in the lessons seen.
- Satisfactory teaching and learning where seen, but opportunities are missed in geography especially.
- Weaknesses in the curriculum are clear and not enough time is given to the two subjects.
- Geography and history have fallen behind the other subjects and are a core priority for future improvement.

119. The judgements of the last inspection were that in geography the requirements of the National Curriculum were not being met and in history standards, though in line at the end of Year 2, were poor at the end of Year 6. The school has had to prioritise its energies and resources and these have quite rightly been aimed at the core subjects. The result is that the provision in history and geography has not improved sufficiently. Standards in both subjects are below national expectations throughout the school overall, though there is some good work in some topics.
120. Progress is restricted by the lack of detailed planning that sets out what pupils are to learn within topics. Both subject coordinators are aware of the need to carry out a radical review of their subjects

and the need to provide colleagues with greater support and guidance in planning and delivering lessons.

121. There was some very good teaching and learning observed in history. Pupils in Year 4 were invited to uncover artefacts buried in compost during their work on the Romans. In Year 5, pupils successfully design their own web page based on the ancient Egyptian practice of embalming. History is made interesting as pupils learn the about life in different historical periods while also learning to distinguish between first and second hand evidence. There are some good displays of pupils' work including mock Tudor houses in one classroom. In years 1 and 2, pupils sequence human development from child to elderly person and consider the differences between utensils in an Edwardian and typically contemporary kitchen.
122. No teaching of geography was observed during the inspection, but other evidence reveals a shortage of opportunities to develop geographic skills. In Years 3 and 4, pupils draw plans of their bedrooms and use these to understand grid references. Teachers' planning identifies other topics to be taught at different times of the school year. To some degree, topics for various year groups are linked to the topics being studied in science in an effort to give coherence to pupils' learning. On occasions when this is well planned, it is of definite value but on others it restricts the choice of history and geography topics.
123. There are no shortages of resources for history and geography and the school makes good use of the local library service. Good use is also made of computers as sources of information in many lessons. The development of the curriculum in these subjects is a priority that the school accepts. Managers plan to address the need as part of its ongoing plans for sustained improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- Good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Below average standards.
- Satisfactory progress.
- Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in lessons.
- Satisfactory teaching and learning.
- Satisfactory curriculum, although the use of ICT is not yet intensive enough.
- Enthusiastic leadership and management of ICT.
- The action plan for the subject holds good promise of improvement.
- ICT is a key area for improvement for the school.

124. Standards are below those expected at the end of Year 2 and 6. Pupils in both years do not have the speed, the range of knowledge and the confidence in skills which schools are beginning to promote nationally. Year 6 pupils have all developed confidence in the use of a desk-top-publishing program to produce colourful memos, but they lack the ability to pursue data handling, spreadsheets or control software to any depth. From talking with pupils and reviewing their work on their disks, it is clear that pupils who have computers at home already have an advantage over those who have not.
125. However, provision for ICT is considerably stronger than it was at the previous inspection. All classes have at least one modern workstation. The wiring, to connect the computers to the Internet and to each other, is nearly complete. Teachers have become more familiar with computers through school-based training and through their own efforts. The school has adopted a nationally recommended scheme of work and this is beginning to influence teachers' planning. The pupils get more time at the keyboard than they did in 1996. There is evidence of planned progression from the scheme. For instance in an art and design application for Year 2, the nature of the task, the level of the work and the greater precision of pupils' control of the lines on screen showed how the teacher had extended the activity since Year 1, and how the pupils had progressed.

126. Teachers have been determined to give as high a profile as possible to the use of the computer in a reasonable range of subjects. This is attributable to the enthusiastic leadership offered by the coordinator, who has provided valuable guidance for teachers. The subject, however, does not yet play a sufficiently important part in the school curriculum. Pupils are developing a good awareness of how useful the computer is in learning about other subjects, but not in a consistent way. No lessons to teach skills to a whole class were timetabled during the period of the inspection. Teachers are uncertain of how to fit computer teaching into the curriculum.
127. Progress over time has in the past been unsatisfactory. However, today, teaching and learning are both satisfactory. On many occasions pupils were observed using the computer effectively, in a variety of ways. Usually working in pairs, they made sound progress because of the thinking they had to do to achieve their tasks successfully. At these times their behaviour was very good, they used the equipment sensibly and concentrated for quite long periods. Teachers set relevant tasks. For example, the Year 4 pupils working on a 'shape shooter' program sharpened their reaction times, gained a better understanding of the properties of three-dimensional shapes and reinforced the maths work they had done in the lesson. Most teachers give instruction in the basic skills of word processing. Pupils do valuable drafting of their ideas while at the keyboard. In a Year 3 lesson, the teacher gave detailed instruction to a pair of pupils that extended their skills considerably during the session. They started with drawing a cube on screen, then had to add text, and then learned how to present text as bullet points. This use of multiple objectives is a model of good practice to ensure progress within one session. However, the method of training one or two pupils at a time is not the most efficient teaching strategy. Generally, pupils who have special educational needs make sound progress during the additional time they get, with support to enable them to work at their own pace. Pupils who have English as a second language cope well with computer tasks.
128. The coordinator sees the impending national training as a turning point for ICT. The action plan for the subject charts the steady development of skills across all year groups, but is now being adjusted to take account of the need for:
- An audit of what pupils can and cannot do in the year groups, with a timetable to bring pupils up to a level platform of skills.
 - A secure strategy that will enable to get pupils using every minute of available time to practice, outside of the lesson introductions.
 - A rota system for pupils to go to the computers, which ensures equal access generally, but continues to allow some additional input for pupils who have special educational needs.
 - A system of monitoring that can ensure consistent coverage of the programmes of study.
 - A simple system of measuring and tracking pupils' progress, which will also contribute to their own knowledge of their learning.
129. Teachers are convincing in their determination to raise provision for ICT to the same level of success as English, mathematics and science. The care they have taken in displaying the pupils' work is evidence of this, and of the increasing range of uses they have found for the computer. They are beginning to see its potential as an effective tool for learning across all the subjects. The improvements charted here are the result of enthusiastic and successful leadership and management. The coordinator knows that things have still to be done to maintain the rate of advance, but the will and determination is clearly evident.

MUSIC

- ❑ Good standards and progress.
- ❑ Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in lessons.
- ❑ Good teaching and learning.
- ❑ Good curriculum; music has a high profile in school.
- ❑ Very good leadership and management.

130. Standards in composing and performing are above national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is an improvement on the picture found at the time of the previous inspection. Music receives a high profile throughout the school and all pupils including those with special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school.
131. Younger pupils in the infants confidently select instruments from a good range of percussion instruments. They can name many of them, showing awareness of the different sounds they make and the different ways they can be played. Pupils listen very well and can distinguish between short and long notes and repeat short musical patterns using a variety of rhythms. Listening to different types of music played in assembly, pupils respond with great enjoyment as well as responding to the different moods the music creates. Pupils in Year 3 confidently use a range of percussion instruments to illustrate pictures of clouds, landscapes and marine themes. Pupils clearly demonstrate crescendo and diminuendo, accelerating and reducing a range of rhythms. In Year 5 groups of pupils successfully compose pieces for untuned percussion instruments, writing in notated form. They clearly match sounds and recitation with a high level of confidence and expertise.
132. Pupils throughout the school sing with enthusiasm. They are encouraged to pay suitable attention to tone and phrasing and sing in tune. The choir is open to all pupils in the juniors and makes an excellent contribution to the quality of singing at assemblies and special occasions. Pupils have the opportunity to extend and broaden their musical education by receiving specialist tuition from tutors in brass and violin. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and most listen carefully to their teachers. Behaviour is very good and this promotes a hard working productive, sometimes noisy, atmosphere. A strength of the subject is the way pupils co-operate and listen sensibly to each other's contribution and make constructive comments. Pupils handle musical instruments with care, collecting and returning them in a very responsible manner.
133. Overall teaching is good with some examples of very good and excellent teaching observed. Lessons are well planned to offer pupils plenty of 'hands on' experience and, as a result, most pupils' learning is good. All pupils are offered the same opportunities and pupils of differing abilities make similar progress, with teachers successfully using interventions and questions to check understanding and encourage original ideas. Very good quality class management, relationships and rates of productivity mean that time is used very effectively. Teachers give clear instructions about the activity and share the lesson objective with the class. In the excellent lesson observed the quality of pace and challenge promoted learning of the highest quality.
134. Music makes a major contribution to pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Highlights of this include a very firm multi-cultural dimension. Music is used very successfully as a 'background' for planned reflection at the start and completion of the school day.
135. The subject is very well managed by a well-qualified, energetic co-ordinator who has identified weaknesses and has developed a clear scheme of work based on guidelines. The music co-ordinator is enthusiastic and presents his lessons with considerable skill to ensure pupils enjoy lessons and make good progress. Resources are of satisfactory quality, easily accessible and used very effectively to gain pupils' motivation and enjoyment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Satisfactory standards and progress.
- Good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in lessons.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Good curriculum, swimming skills develop well because of the quality of provision.
- Assessment and monitoring require improvement.
- Appropriate out-of-lesson sports and PE activities.
- The subject is soundly managed and led by the senior management team as a temporary measure.

136. There has been considerable improvement in the standards attained by the end of Year 6 since the last inspection. The pupils now make satisfactory progress and the subject fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.
137. Attainment and progress at the end of Year 2 is in line with expectations building on good achievement in reception classes where expectations are particularly high. This was evident in lessons where pupils were investigating different ways of moving. Creative use of apparatus combined with skilful intervention and positive specific feedback by both class teachers and classroom assistants encouraged pupils of all abilities to high levels of personal achievement. Attainment in infant classes was better where good control and questioning by the class teacher resulted in all pupils listening attentively and remaining on task for sustained periods of time. This was evident in a Year 2 class where pupils were exhibiting good interpretation to a Music and Movement tape, producing many creative ideas when producing happy and sad movements.
138. Attainment and progress through the junior classes is also in line with expectations with some examples of good attainment and very good progress over the period of a single lesson. An example of this was seen in a Year 5/6 class where some very good teaching produced equally good attainment by pupils in terms of their ball skills and the ability of individuals to effectively contribute to a team. The attitude of the pupils during this lesson was outstanding; the time taken by the teacher to engage the pupils in the clarification of rules and in the control of their own games was rewarded by increased levels of attainment. Significant contributions to the personal and social education of the pupils also added to the effectiveness of this particular lesson suggesting the potential in future for the subject to make an even greater contribution to the school's ethos. Further evidence of this was seen in the response of pupils to a mistake by a goalkeeper, resulting in a score for the opposition. The reaction of the pupils in consoling rather than criticising the goalkeeper speaks volumes for the attainment of the pupils in terms of their personal, social and cultural education and for the positive attitudes of the school to social inclusion.
139. The school meets National Curriculum requirements in terms of providing swimming tuition, at a local swimming baths, for junior pupils. The majority of pupils can swim 25 metres unaided by the time they leave the school. The pupils benefit from opportunities to take part in an appropriate programme of activities after school, ranging from a football club to Salsa dancing. There are plans to extend the range and scope of these activities. Pupils from the school have also benefited from taking part in Aston Schools' Athletics and Football tournaments and in the Birmingham Schools' cross-country events. The effective development of skills is also enriched by a Year 6 outdoor activities week to Merevale Centre. The resources in the school are adequate and are used effectively to promote learning. For example, the small grassed area, in conjunction with the playground, is used for a 'round-robin' type of Sports Day in the summer term. This is an event which is a social occasion for the school with the active participation of parents and staff. Similarly, the use of an adventure play area is incorporated into pupils' physical development opportunities. These diverse opportunities give pupils the chance to develop skills and knowledge at a satisfactory rate.

140. Physical education teaching is good, as is the quality of learning. In addition, the attitude of the pupils to the subject is good. Pupils learn about themselves and their capabilities through positive feedback and they see themselves as achievers.
141. There is a policy and scheme of work in place but the subject will benefit from the establishment of a permanent PE co-ordinator. At present, the subject is managed effectively by the senior managers of the school. With increased input from the co-ordinator to monitor pupils' progress, to enhance teachers' subject knowledge and to improve assessment opportunities, the subject is well placed to make a significant contribution to the school's overall curriculum provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- Good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Good standards and progress.
- Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in lessons.
- Good teaching and learning.
- Good curriculum but assessment is a weakness.
- Good leadership and management.

142. Provision for religious education has improved substantially since the previous inspection. Standards are no longer unsatisfactory. By the time the pupils leave the school, and by the end of Year 2, their knowledge and understanding is above the level expected by the locally agreed syllabus for pupils aged 7 and 11. Pupils now make good progress throughout the school, particularly in learning from religion to guide their daily lives, and also learning about different faiths. This is because the teachers are able to plan lessons in a logical sequence from the school's scheme of work, to ensure that pupils cover all the elements of the syllabus.
143. The teaching is good throughout the school. This has a strong impact on both the progress pupils make and their very positive attitude to religious lessons. Teachers plan carefully and have a clear objective for each lesson, which includes extending both the pupils' knowledge and their understanding. They do this by a variety of methods which engage the pupils' interest. In a lesson about Church services, the teacher gave Year 2 pupils the chance to look at and feel the weight of the vestments which the vicar would wear. They had never been so close to these items before and it gave them a clear insight into the purpose and beauty of the garments. The teachers make sure that they give pupils all the names and technical terms, and explain what they mean. This is particularly valuable for pupils who have English as an additional language, because it extends their vocabulary. Resources in school are now much better.
144. Year 4 pupils gained a good understanding of the story of Jesus and the paralysed man, by acting parts of it themselves. Then in a strong drama technique known as 'hot-seating', the actors explained their feelings to their classmates in some depth. By the time the story had been retold in several versions all pupils had a secure knowledge of it, but still kept up their concentration and interest when the time came to record their thoughts in writing. In keeping with a subject that has so much to do with right and wrong and behaviour, the pupils' behaviour in the lessons is very good, at times excellent. This builds the school ethos, a tremendous turn round from the previous inspection when pupils often moved round the classrooms chatting aimlessly.
145. There is nothing aimless about the older pupils' talk. They listen carefully and answer the teachers' probing question thoughtfully. Teaching is very good in the lessons which also include a 'circle time', where the pupils communicate their thoughts in turn around the circle. The teacher creates an atmosphere of trust and confidence where pupils feel confident to convey their private feelings; sometimes with a polite *Can I be completely honest?* The teachers open up issues which are important to the pupils, such as the situation when friends put pressure on them to play games such as

kerbie, which they know to be dangerous. Teachers handle these discussions very sensitively and pupils grow in understanding that these are difficult areas, and that they are not alone in facing such problems. Teachers show similar sensitivity in planning work activities. These are closely matched to the pupils' ability to do them, achievable yet challenging. This keeps the pupils on their toes, for instance having to think hard about the links between the Last Supper and the Communion service, which they had experienced on their visit to St. Mary's Church. Pupils who have special educational needs are particularly well supported. Their level of interest is obvious when they give a cheer at the start of their 'cut and paste' task. Although simple at first, the cut pieces of the evidence have to be put in the right order. This sharpens their thinking, and leads them to see how their writing can be sequenced. They grow in self-esteem by completing the task successfully.

146. The management of the subject has achieved both a strong sense of direction and an enthusiasm for teaching it. At present there is no system for measuring attainment or pupils' progress. They do not yet have a clear picture of their own steps in learning, but this self-evaluation is an aspect about which they may have sensible suggestions to make. Year 2 pupils also have a thoughtful and caring attitude. The good teaching promotes a sound knowledge about Christianity, the life and death of Jesus, and the meaning of Christmas. Pupils are made aware of festivals and celebrations, and that they occur in other beliefs, such as Diwali. The teachers responded to the previous report of limited resources. In lessons such as the Noah's Ark topic they provide a particularly wide range of approach, where pupils read different versions of the Bible, study it on tape and disk, in models and posters. Pupils brainstorm their ideas, and in writing, creating collages and by presenting puppet plays secure their learning of the key facts, and reinforce their literacy skills.
147. The subject is well led and managed The coordinator is determined to make good strides in developing a rigorous system of assessment.