

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST. JOSEPH & ST. BEDE R.C. PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Bury

LEA area : Bury

Unique reference number : 105336

Headteacher : Ms. Sue McAvady

Reporting inspector : Elizabeth Camplin
3586

Dates of inspection : 18th – 19th October 2001

Inspection number : 194939

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Danesmoor Drive Bury Lancashire
Postcode:	BL9 6ER
Telephone number:	0161 7643781
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Anthony Mannion
Date of previous inspection:	17 th – 20 th March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Joseph and St. Bede R.C. Primary School is situated near the centre of Bury, Lancashire, in an area of relative social and economic deprivation. It caters for children from Catholic families in two parishes in the Salford Diocese. The school is large, having a total roll of 371 pupils, aged between three to eleven years. Of these, 36 attend the nursery part-time, and 46 are in the reception year. Seventeen reception age children are taught in a mixed-age class with ten Year 1 children. The number of boys and girls is almost equal. Most pupils are white, and include eight pupils from mixed-race families. All have English as their first language. Their attainment is low when they start nursery. Soon after children enter the reception class they are formally tested in early language, literacy, mathematical and social skills. The results are below the average scores achieved by rising 5-year-olds in other local schools, and nationally, particularly in communication, language and literacy development. Six pupils, (an average number in percentage terms) have learning difficulties for which they have statements of special educational need. These needs are wide-ranging and include; dyslexia, Downs Syndrome, physical, speech and communication, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The percentage of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, and the percentage known to be entitled to free school meals, is similar to most schools across the country.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly effective school. Pupils attain high standards of achievement by the time they are eleven years old. Good teaching, including some excellent practice, enables pupils to make considerable progress from low levels of attainment on entry to the nursery. The headteacher works very effectively with key staff. They provide excellent leadership and management and the whole staff team provides care and guidance of a high quality. Governors support the school well and ensure that it makes the most of its financial, human and physical resources. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Literacy and numeracy skills, and science, are so thoroughly taught that pupils achieve high academic standards by Year 6.
- Considerable effort and skill is invested into fostering pupils' care, well being and all-round development. This ensures that they form excellent relationships, develop a love of learning, and behave particularly well.
- The home/school partnership is excellent. The school epitomises parents' ideal of a strong and vibrant Christian community.
- Outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher, and very good teamwork, combine to enable the school to build on its success and go from strength to strength.

What could be improved

- Teaching time could be used even more effectively and additional opportunities are needed for pupils to take initiative in lessons and evaluate their own progress.
- The school's aims and achievements could be more clearly celebrated and promoted through the school Prospectus and School Improvement Plan.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997. Since then, it has made very good improvement. Issues arising, such as the need to improve the quality of lesson planning and assessment, and provision in information and communication technology, have been rigorously addressed and overcome. The headteacher, staff and governors are more skilled at school improvement planning though some criteria for measuring success lack precision and are therefore difficult to interpret. The school understands how to maintain strengths and identify areas for further development. It takes effective action to make improvements. Rising standards provide strong evidence of success.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	C	C	A	A
Mathematics	E	C	B	B
Science	C	A	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards of work are high in both key stages. Pupils in Year 6 achieve close to capacity in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and Year 2 pupils do well in writing and science, and are improving from a sound base in their reading. Standards have shown consistent improvement in the past three years. The school has succeeded in meeting, or exceeding, its annual targets. Results in 2001 confirm this positive trend. Pupils make rapid progress in understanding and applying literacy and numeracy skills, and are very good at retaining factual information, especially in science. Children with special educational needs benefit from tasks that challenge and motivate them. Their progress is as good as higher-attaining peer-groups. Standards could be higher still if pupils were to be more independent and confident in applying what they know of number, shape and measure in new contexts, notably for solving a wider variety of problems in mathematics. Children under six years of age make rapid progress from low levels of attainment on entry. Most are likely to achieve highly and exceed learning goals for the age group in personal development, and early language, literacy and mathematical development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' highly positive attitudes contribute significantly to the very good quality of their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. Pupils respond to adults' high expectations of them for exemplary manners and conduct.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent and personal development is good. Pupils show the capacity to exercise even more responsibility for organising their own learning.
Attendance	Attendance satisfactorily matches the national average for primary schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	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.

Good teaching characterises the whole school. There is some excellent practice in the creative area of learning in the nursery and in mathematics in Year 6. Nursery children were seen to make exceptional progress in early music making skills and the oldest juniors did equally well in a lesson involving sequencing numbers. Almost a third of lessons seen were very good. There is a particularly strong emphasis, from the nursery class onwards, on nurturing pupils' confidence and love of learning. Planning for literacy and numeracy development is very thorough. Teachers and support assistants work very effectively together to support pupils. Just occasionally the pace of the lesson is rather slow, or work is not challenging enough. Then pupils consolidate skills rather than make significant gains in learning. Pupils in every class sustain interest and effort as they acquire and practise reading, writing, and mathematical knowledge and skills. Irrespective of individual aptitudes and special educational needs, pupils make good progress in each key stage. Overall, pupils' progress is impressive between starting in the nursery and leaving school at the end of Year 6.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a curricular programme of good quality in all three stages. Arrangements well meet statutory requirements and pupils' needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Programmes of work for pupils with special educational needs are impressive and aid progress considerably.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good. It epitomises the school's Mission Statement, and strong sense of family and community values. Pupils are constantly encouraged to behave well and treat others with consideration, respect and love.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of its pupils. Procedures for promoting pupils' care and welfare are very thorough and carefully implemented.

Particularly good use is made of educational visits and visitors to make topic work interesting and the content of different subjects relevant to pupils' own experience. Every adult who works in the school promotes and upholds the school's ethos. Annual reports are written in a supportive style and progress is being made in making them as informative and useful to parents as possible.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management. She is an exemplary role model for staff. Senior teachers and the whole staff team support her very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively and are particularly successful in the management of personnel, curricular, premises and financial matters of school governance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher sets the tone for rigorous evaluation of the school's performance. She ensures that effective action is taken to achieve necessary change and improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Care is taken to ensure that the school fully harnesses its available resources to meet the current and future needs of its pupils.

The significant strengths of the school are the ways in which it personifies its Christian identity and enables pupils to attain high standards. The principles of best value are applied very well. The main development point is to ensure that the Prospectus and School Improvement Plan communicate the school's aims, achievements and priorities as clearly as possible.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents are happy that pupils progress very well and achieve high academic and behavioural standards.• Parents are highly satisfied with the way the school is led and managed.• Parents are confident to approach the school with problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents think homework could be better organised, especially for mathematics.• Parents would like the school to arrange more educational visits and extra-curricular activities.

Parents view the school very positively. The inspection team concluded that the partnership with them is excellent and makes a very significant contribution to pupils' rapid progress during their time at the school. Overall, they found homework activities to be well organised and that the school provides a good range of educational opportunities outside normal lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Literacy and numeracy skills, and science, are so thoroughly taught that pupils achieve high academic standards by Year 6.

1. Standards are very good by the end of Year 6. In particular, pupils excel in English and science. They also attain above the national average in mathematics. If pupils, and girls in particular, sustain the improvements made in 2001 compared with 2000 in applying mathematical knowledge to solve problems, standards could be even higher still in mathematics. Overall, achievement is high compared with similar schools and compared with pupils' results when in Year 2. Standards show continuous improvement over three successive years with the results from 2001 confirming this positive trend. The prime reason for pupils' success is the good quality of teaching, much of which includes examples of very good practice. Only the very isolated lesson has shortcomings that inhibit pupils' progress.

2. The basics of literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively from the time of entry to the nursery class. Many very young children then lack confidence and knowledge of early communication, literacy and mathematical skills. They are unsure of themselves when coming into contact with lots of other children and unknown adults. School records indicate that attainment is much lower than expected of the age group. The nursery team creates an environment in which children can learn quickly through practical play experiences. Children are effectively taught to express themselves and explore language, number, simple mathematical ideas, and the world around them. Good examples are children being encouraged to learn each other's names by singing them to one another, and counting themselves in order to organise the right number of cartons of drinks for everyone. These pupils were fascinated by the opportunity to find out how to prepare dough when making harvest bread. They are surrounded by a wealth of good aids for learning, and adults who are eager to help them to make new discoveries. Worthy of special mention was a particularly interesting 'medical centre' containing an excellent selection of books, posters, equipment, and bold captions. It very ably promoted curiosity and imaginative play and encouraged children to recall what they had learnt from visits by a dentist and an optician earlier in the term.

3. Teachers and their assistants sustain this good practice in the reception year. Lessons are sensitively managed so that all children participate irrespective of their abilities and needs. Learning nursery rhymes, for example, motivated the whole class to distinguish letter sounds and rhymes. There was spontaneous applause when volunteers recited whilst their friends listened. There was deserved recognition when children correctly identified the names of the starting sounds of words selected by the teacher. There is plenty of emphasis on exploring and explaining new ideas, such as during a lesson about the senses. Children loved learning how different smells send messages to the brain as they guessed the contents of sealed containers and made 'smelly' collage pictures. They were able, by the end of the lesson, to describe a range of odours using appropriate descriptive language and also gained an understanding of why blind people rely so much upon the sense of smell. Skilled questioning, discussion and practical activities, habitually promotes children's interest in mathematics. In one lively fifteen minute period pupils worked out combinations of numbers to five. The lesson moved on productively to extend pupils' understanding of using units of measure. The teacher enabled them to see that when they had used hand spans to measure objects in the previous lesson, each result was different. They realised

from the discussion and practical work that the use of a set measure, such as a drinking straw, helps to achieve greater accuracy.

4. In Years 1 and 2, teachers plan regularly together to make sure pupils continue to build successfully on prior learning. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well. They learnt, for example, in a Year 1 lesson, how to recognise the double consonant 'ck' at the end of a word, and in a Year 2 lesson, how to distinguish between words that sound the same but contain either 'ee' or 'ea'. Already pupils in Year 2 are enthusiastically practising their spelling when writing stories based on texts they have enjoyed together in shared reading time. Teachers help by providing illustrated story planners and word banks for children to use independently. A mixed-ability group met with an inspector, and, for example, ably read aloud their versions of 'The Queen's Green Beads'. At the same time they happily explained how they learn to spell and punctuate writing with capital letters, full stops, and even speech marks. Pupils are encouraged to tackle a range of mathematical problems involving addition, subtraction, ordering numbers and extending knowledge of shape, space and measure. Pupils are confident in simple mental activities such as counting forwards and backwards in tens, and with reciting odd and even numbers to 20. They are keen to answer simple problems involving, for example, money calculations, and already know, through practical experience, about metric systems for measuring length, capacity, and weight. Opportunities for practising reading, writing and mathematics are frequently woven into science lessons, such as when Year 2 pupils, learning about how they grow, investigated whether the tallest child also had the biggest feet.

5. With such a wealth of relevant experiences, by the end of Key Stage 1, standards in writing, spelling, mathematics and science have been improving. They were above average in 2000. Results in 2001 are still better. More pupils performed at above the expected level and there was a significant improvement in reading standards. Pupils' achievement is above average compared with the achievement of their peer groups in similar schools in writing and mathematics.

6. In every junior year group, relationships between adults and pupils are as positive as in the infant and nursery classes. It is just as noticeable how well teachers plan learning objectives for pupils at different stages of development. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils of lower ability were given lots of opportunities and skilled help to improve recall of number bonds to 20. At the same time, the more mathematically able pupils worked with numbers beyond a hundred. All pupils showed enthusiasm and initiative as they described their various approaches to solving problems and were rewarded with warm affirmation of their efforts. In Year 6, the teacher found ingenious ways of involving all children in developing the appreciation of the genre of fantasy, through the extended study of 'The Wizard of Oz'. She successfully fostered pupils' confidence to write, read and perform play scripts and ensured pupils with individual learning plans had every opportunity to work on tasks closely linked to the lesson theme. In the other Year 6 class, the teacher used a wall chart and whiteboard very well to explore with pupils how to recognise and write an obituary. The oldest juniors did equally well in a lesson involving ordering, adding and subtracting negative numbers.

7. With time at a premium, teachers emphasise specific subject knowledge but also ensure pupils practise cross-curricular skills in different contexts. In Year 3, for example, a science lesson about how to keep healthy made the most of pupils' enjoyment of the fun poem by Pam Ayres 'I wish I'd looked after me teeth'. They went on to make posters that contained clear instructions for caring for teeth, and all worked hard to present their work legibly and attractively. Most were proficient in their use of a cursive script. In Year 4, a

lesson about skeletons enabled pupils to reinforce their knowledge of prefixes when they distinguished between vertebrates and invertebrates. In Year 5, in a mathematics lesson about interpreting data, the teacher extended pupils' knowledge of co-ordinates, weather conditions, and the use of computer graphics. She patiently demonstrated how to plot information about temperature onto a line graph. Lower-achievers, particularly, responded with increasing confidence as they practised this skill for themselves.

8. The school has developed such a thorough approach to planning and assessment that new teachers, including two who are newly qualified, feel confident that they know what pupils have achieved and what they are ready for next. These teachers led some of the best lessons observed, including one in reception about senses and another in Year 5 about interpreting data.

9. Judging from the outcomes of lessons, the scrutiny of work, and the analysis of test results in Year 2000 and 2001, there is real potential for the school to raise standards even further so that it joins the ranks of the top 5% of schools nationally.

Considerable effort and skill is invested into fostering pupils' care, well being and all-round development. This ensures that they form excellent relationships, develop a love of learning, and behave particularly well.

10. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good. It epitomises the school's Mission Statement. This emphasises the common bond of Christian faith, combined with empathy and tolerance of the beliefs and practices of people who do not belong to the Catholic Church. The harvest festival on the last afternoon of the inspection was a memorable spiritual experience for all those who watched and listened to pupils, as they celebrated this special occasion in the school's calendar of events.

11. The quality of provision for personal development is high because of the example set by teachers and all members of staff, of how to work in harmony. The headteacher sets the tone in the way she treats children, parents, staff and visitors. She is unfailingly courteous, patient, and fair in the way she relates to others. It is very apparent how close relationships are between her and the pupils. During playtime many are eager to greet her and share little confidences. Despite the size of the school roll the headteacher knew the names of all pupils who approached her. When she walks into a classroom pupils listen with interest to what she has to say. Their affection and respect is easy to see. Parents know this. One wrote, "This school genuinely cares for, and protects, the children. Much of this is due to the influence of the headteacher who shows great skill in communicating with children and managing children."

12. Inspectors regularly reported how well teachers and classroom assistants interact with pupils and help them to do their best. They were seen encouraging children to 'have a go' and then praising effort. An excellent example was when the music teacher joined the nursery team to teach the very youngest children how to sing and perform a combination of old favourites and new songs. The children were a delight to watch as they responded eagerly to the teacher's suggestions and prompts. Other memorable examples included when the teacher gave reception children a pat on the back when volunteers tried to guess substances that produced different smells, and when Year 6 pupils were encouraged to give a bow, after performing a short extract of a play they had written. Children take their cue from teachers. They often break into applause or give friends a nod or smile of acknowledgement. They really enjoy seeing each other succeed. Similarly, support assistants for pupils with statements of special educational need were quick to draw inspectors' attention to the achievements of their charges. An example was an older junior

boy's effort to recognise how to spell words beginning with a given double consonant sound. There was not one example recorded of pupils behaving inappropriately, either to adults or to each other.

13. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they are given to exercise responsibility and initiative. They can be relied upon to carry out tasks independently and to think about the consequences of their actions. They organise raffles and sales of cakes and comics to raise money for charities. They write prayers for collective worship and contribute ideas as to what should be incorporated into school rules. When trusted to work independently, pupils are careful not to interrupt their teacher. They realise it would be unfair to disrupt the learning of other children. As well as promoting consideration for others, teachers also promote personal care and hygiene. Science lessons are used well, for example, to promote the importance of exercise and daily routines, such as dental care. Educational visits and extra-curricular activities enrich the academic and personal development aspects of learning. Junior pupils provided inspectors with many examples of occasions they remember. One was a visit to 'Showstoppers' in Bury to watch extracts from famous musicals, such as 'Cats'. Others related to their own performance of 'Oliver'; learning about safety procedures from the 'Crucial Crew' team and a visit to Burrs Country Park, where Year 5 pupils were required to work in teams to help a blindfolded friend find the way round a maze.

14. Procedures for promoting pupils' care and welfare at playtime and on school outings are very thorough and carefully implemented. Playground supervisors are fully aware of the school's behaviour policy and safety procedures. They provide high standards of supervision outside of lessons. Parents report the same kind of vigilance when children go out of school, to visit the church or places of educational interest. Children are well taught how to care for each other and how to respond to adults. They demonstrate this in their conduct in and around the school. They also live up to the school's high expectations of them when talking to visitors. The way in which several groups of pupils shared their views of the school and communicated their love of their teachers and learning was impressive. They could give so many examples of why their school was special but top of the list were the teachers. "They are great," they said, emphatically.

The home/school partnership is excellent. The school epitomises parents' ideal of a strong and vibrant Christian community.

15. Parents have considerable confidence and pride in the school. They are used to being consulted about many aspects of school policy and aims. They have, for example, input into agreeing the Mission Statement and the way in which the programme of sex education is organised. Some parents describe on the questionnaires what they believe to be outstanding teaching and standards of care. The parent of a ten-year-old wrote, "Both my children have attended from nursery. My eldest child is in Year 6 and has received excellent teaching throughout the years. My children are both very happy and enjoy school very much. I made an excellent choice when I chose this school."

16. Those parents who attended the Parents' Meeting with the registered inspector were unanimous in their praise for the school's welcoming atmosphere. They were confident of a friendly reception whatever they wished to discuss. They were particularly appreciative of the effort nursery staff make to get to know new children. Membership of an early intervention project, organised by Bury Borough, has increased expertise in behaviour management. One-to-one support for nursery and reception children with socialising difficulties is reported to have a beneficial impact upon the way specially selected children settle and adjust to school routines. One parent made a point of telling a member of the

team how delighted she is with her daughter's start. "I expected tears" she said, "but now I find I can't tear her away!" Parents are encouraged to help in the classroom and with homework tasks, and many do. They receive such helpful guidance about how to help children that several have gone on to join further education courses, and gain career-enhancing qualifications.

17. The local Education Welfare Officer wrote to the team to describe the very effective links between welfare services and the school, and the sensitive way in which the school works with families who need support. This may be to get children to school on a regular basis. It may also be that families are grieving and the school responds to that grief with a home visit, a card or a special story for the children involved. During the past eight years, a pastoral group of staff has collected clothes and footwear to distribute to needy children, and harvest parcels are similarly distributed to families who may have financial or other difficult home circumstances.

18. The school serves its community outside school hours as well as during the teaching day. It operates care clubs before and after school that many parents gratefully use. Some were seen dropping their children off early in the morning knowing they would be happily engrossed in a variety of play activities until it was time to join their class.

19. Parents and members of the extended family are frequent visitors to collective worship on Friday afternoons. They join with staff and children to celebrate together. The hall was packed during harvest festival, and it rang with the combined voices of adults and children as they sang 'thank you' hymns together. The headteacher summed up the school ethos as she led all those present in the school prayer. "May love dwell here amongst us every day", she said. It clearly does.

Outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher, and very good teamwork, combine to enable the school to build on its success and go from strength to strength.

20. The previous inspection report highlighted five action points that the school needed to address to maintain efforts to raise standards. The headteacher, already acknowledged at that time as a capable leader and manager, set about developing an appropriate plan with determination and vigour. With strong support from members of the governing body and staff, every issue has been tackled with care. A thorough review of the senior management team structure took place. Roles were redefined, and the solution has been very successful. Each primary stage of learning is co-ordinated by a member of the senior management team. They ensure that systems of communication and plans of action work well. Despite the size of the school, and the appointment of several new teachers, liaison between year groups, and key stages, about curriculum planning, and assessment procedures, is very effective. There is no longer any evidence of teachers going their own way, and not following school policies.

21. The headteacher has devised a programme of classroom support and monitoring visits that gives her first-hand information about what is happening in every classroom. These visits are carefully recorded. Good practice is clearly celebrated, and areas for development are helpfully explained. Teachers find the feedback very constructive. They take heed of suggestions and the results are positive. The training in information and communication technology has been particularly useful. It has enhanced teachers' confidence enormously. Staff feel teaching and learning are continuously improving as a consequence of very practical professional development advice. The improved assessment results certainly support their views.

22. In addition to the programme of class visits, the headteacher and the senior management team also check pupils' work from time to time, to add to their evidence about standards. The school makes very good use of Bury Local Authority's Support Service data every year to undertake a thorough analysis of statutory and voluntary tests results. In this way, the school identifies trends, positive and negative, and then identifies the pupils it needs to target with special support in order to bridge gaps between them and higher-attaining pupils. It also uses the information to set its statutory targets for English and mathematics in Year 6. This strategy has been very successful, with many children making gains during the four junior years far in excess of the national average. Gains in mathematics in 2001 were outstanding.

23. Some teachers left the school in July for career and family reasons. As a consequence, five new teachers have been appointed, two of them being new to the profession. The School Improvement Plan makes their successful induction a top priority, in order that they quickly feel part of the team, and children's continuity of learning is assured. The support systems are working very well. None of the new staff feel out of their depth because an experienced partner mentors each one. They are amazed at how motivated pupils are to learn and to behave well. The inspection team also met with all categories of support staff working in the school, including the site caretaker. They are as positive as the teachers about the way they are deployed and supported. They cite the school's family atmosphere as being the key to its success.

24. The school does indeed have an excellent ethos and it is very much due to the exceptional inter-personal skills of the headteacher. She operates an open-door policy and makes time to meet with parents who need her help and encouragement. Liaison with the chair of governors, the governing body, and the local diocese, is equally effective. Formal and informal channels of communication are very good. Governors participate closely in school management, and their input is much welcome and appreciated. They show skill, for example, in managing a very tight budget to ensure that the school meets its priorities but avoids a situation where it operates a permanent deficit. Governors and the headteacher have planned carefully so that the school will achieve an adequate contingency surplus by March 2002. The partnership with the diocese is also genuine and positive. Empathy with the community is strong. In its Prospectus is the promise, "Your child will flourish if the home, school and parish work in harmony and support of each other." The school is moving from strength to strength due to its total commitment to this inclusion principle.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Teaching time could be used even more effectively, and additional opportunities are needed for pupils to take initiative in lessons and evaluate their own progress.

25. Teachers are very skilled at pupil behaviour management. As a consequence, they were not seen to have to contend with inappropriate attitudes or disruptive behaviour. They make constructive use of the literacy and numeracy strategy planning frameworks, National Curriculum guidance documents, school schemes of work, and textbooks. Full advantage is taken of professional development opportunities and subject expertise within the school. Teachers and support assistants plan in teams, with experienced teachers supporting the less experienced. Everyone knows what aspects of knowledge and understanding to cover each week and term in every subject. Overall, just two or three teaching strategies were identified as in need of strengthening to achieve greater consistency throughout the school. These were to do with time-management and the organisation of group tasks and resources rather than anything else.

26. In the nursery, children have a wealth of resources available to them. They thoroughly enjoy play activities and this is when they are at their most vocal. They also learn a lot from working together as a whole class. Nonetheless, when they sit listening to adults and waiting for drinks for quite long periods, they are passive rather than active learners. Few get the chance to speak. The school responded positively when it realised that nursery children found collective worship was not meeting the needs of its three-year-olds. It would be worthwhile considering whether time could be adjusted to provide children with more flexible arrangements for taking refreshments and for enjoying fresh air.

27. Lessons normally begin with pupils sitting altogether on the carpet. The teacher uses this time well to re-cap on prior learning and to describe new learning objectives. These are often displayed for pupils to read and remember and they find this helpful. Oral exchanges are frequently of high quality with questions and answers bouncing back and forth at a lively pace. Teachers and pupils make good use of aids such as number charts and whiteboards to record and check answers. In science they were seen to make equally imaginative use of living creatures, such as slugs! Just occasionally these oral sessions go on for too long. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, for example, a few pupils lost concentration and were ready to move on to individual work and Year 4 pupils had insufficient time to record their observations of the habits of slugs.

28. Teachers in all year groups successfully inspire pupils to take a strong interest in science. For example, in Year 6 they make good use of resources such as videos and candles when extending understanding about materials and irreversible change. In Year 4 and 5 they impart factual information very well. As a result, junior pupils know a great deal about the human body and the way it functions. A few pupils in Year 5 recalled with pleasure a recent lesson in the hall when they conducted tests to learn more about what happens to muscles and the heart when the body is subjected to strenuous exercise. Nonetheless, practical learning is too controlled by adults. Pupils, on balance, were seen to spend more time following instructions from the teacher rather than finding their own ways to set up a test or record results and information. When pupils were learning about changes to their pulse rate, for example, the class carried out an appropriate range of experiments. The teacher, rather than the pupils, timed the outcomes. Pupils did not have access to a stopwatch and therefore an ideal opportunity was missed for pupils to learn how to use one.

29. There are pupils in each class with a wide range of ability and in the best lessons teachers are very good at providing tasks that focus on the same learning objective, but with an appropriate amount of challenge built into the working and recording methods. Just occasionally the way in which tasks are managed does not work well enough. On these occasions, pupils at different stages of development consolidate, rather than extend, knowledge and understanding. This occurred in a literacy lesson in Year 1 and in a mathematics lesson in Year 6. In the first, children were all set the same writing activity. They had adult support, but no additional help from visual aids, dictionaries, or targets that reflected capability. The quality of writing suffered because of lack of stimulus and motivation. The top set of older juniors also started with exactly the same work on fractions and percentages. The most able pupils were asked to produce more of the same if they finished before their peers. They could have been offered the chance to choose another relevant mathematical activity to extend their experience.

30. The school has set itself a very appropriate target to increase pupils' involvement in evaluating their own learning. Many lessons end with an effective review by pupils of their progress during the lesson. This is particularly valuable when pupils share and explain

success and misconceptions as well as celebrate hard work and effort. Inspectors noted that some lessons ended too quickly to enable this review to happen. There were missed opportunities to ask pupils what they think they need to consolidate and are ready to move onto next.

31. In order to extend pupils that little bit further, teachers now need to continue with efforts to ensure every lesson fully meets all their needs. They could also profitably provide pupils with more opportunities to develop their understanding of their own pace of learning.

The school's aims and achievements could be more clearly celebrated and promoted through the school Prospectus and School Improvement Plan.

32. The governing body soundly meets a statutory requirement to publish a Prospectus that sets out the school's purpose, admission policy, and ways of organising the curriculum and pastoral care. It contains the school Mission Statement and a delightful open letter to parents that reflect the school's Catholic identity and welcoming ethos. The Prospectus does not, however, rigorously fulfil requirements in every respect. It does not include, for example, details of arrangements for admitting pupils under 5 years old; the number of pupils on roll in addition to attendance data; the number of pupils taking statutory tests in each key stage, or the teacher assessment results. Information is limited about the school's policies on providing for pupils with special educational needs, with and without statements. Desirable information is also excluded. There is no description of arrangements for exceptionally gifted or talented pupils, and no statement about the school's aims for sports and the arts. The lack of these features means the Prospectus is not as informative or useful as it has the potential to be. The school is also missing an ideal opportunity to publicise and celebrate its very many strengths. It has not considered that omitting this information might have a detrimental effect on the recruitment of pupils.

33. The School Improvement Plan has proved a very useful tool to the headteacher, staff and governors. Over the intervening years between this inspection and the last it has enabled the school to communicate agreed improvement targets and keep track of progress towards them. The school has improved its methods of self-review and evaluation of statutory test results. It has used the findings to set realistic statutory performance targets in English and mathematics, and then planned action to successfully achieve them. Professional development opportunities and greater access to information and communication technology resources has considerably enhanced teaching and learning in core subjects.

34. Despite these positive strategic planning outcomes there remains scope to make better use of very specific information to make improvement objectives and success criteria even sharper. It would help governors, for example, to be clear about what exactly is meant by the success criteria 'successful induction of two newly qualified teachers'. An even better example is in respect to girls' achievement compared with girls nationally in English and mathematics. A report produced after a recent review visit from a local authority adviser shows that the school realises there has been a slight drop in girls' reading results in 2001. Performance figures show that for the past three years the trend has been for girls to do less well than boys compared with their peer groups nationally. The main issue, therefore, appears to be the extent to which girls perform to their fullest capacity in writing and mathematics. Targets are lacking to focus teachers and governors on this possible improvement goal. If such targets were incorporated, the school could improve the way it communicates that it aims to join the exceptionally effective schools that occupy the top 5% for standards achieved in Year 6.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. In order to fulfil aims for pupils to achieve even higher standards, the school should:-

Concentrate on ensuring that teaching time is consistently used to best effect by :-

- A. Making sure introductions to lessons do not go on for too long;
- B. Making sure all groups of pupils have tasks that challenge them appropriately;
- C. Giving pupils sufficient opportunities to find and explain their own ways of recording information or solving problems;
- D. Enabling pupils to take further part in evaluating the progress they make in lessons.

(paragraphs 25 – 31)

37. Improve the content of the Prospectus and School Improvement Plan so that :-

- A. The statutory content of the Prospectus is comprehensively covered;
- B. Potential can be identified for adding non-statutory information that parents would find helpful;
- C. The plan for improvement contains more precise objectives for raising girls' achievement in English and mathematics;
- D. Performance criteria are written in a way that makes it easy for governors to measure success, especially with raising standards and inducting new teachers.

(paragraphs 32 - 34)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	6	11	7	1	0	0
Percentage	7	23	40	26	4	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YN – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	18	353
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	42

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YN – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	71

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.10
National comparative data	5.20

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.30
National comparative data	0.50

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 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	25	22	47

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	24	24
	Girls	20	20	21
	Total	43	44	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (84)	94 (88)	96 (77)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	24	24
	Girls	20	21	21
	Total	43	45	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (84)	96 (82)	96 (84)
	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 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	27	29	56

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	20	22	23
	Girls	28	23	29
	Total	48	45	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (66)	80 (60)	93 (88)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	24	21
	Girls	24	25	28
	Total	43	49	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (68)	89 (42)	89 (63)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	281
Any other minority ethnic group	8

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: YN – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.50
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.90
Average class size	26.50

Education support staff: YN – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	106

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	695578
Total expenditure	708916
Expenditure per pupil	1932
Balance brought forward from previous year	11585
Balance carried forward to next year	-1753

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	350
Number of questionnaires returned	89

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	30	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	38	1	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	40	7	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	44	2	0	7
The teaching is good.	65	31	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	44	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	21	1	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	27	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	37	4	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	73	25	0	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	33	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	35	21	2	4

Other issues raised by parents

No issues raised.