

INSPECTION REPORT

ST ALBAN'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Walker, Newcastle upon Tyne.

LEA area: Newcastle upon Tyne.

Unique reference number: 108515

Head teacher: Mr M Donnelly

Reporting inspector: Mr J J Peacock
25344

Dates of inspection: 6-8 May 2003

Inspection number: 246802

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 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Westbourne Avenue Walker Newcastle upon Tyne
Postcode:	NE6 4HQ
Telephone number:	0191 2625552
Fax number:	-
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Michael Conaty
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Alban's Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary School caters for pupils from three to 11 years of age. It is about the same size as other schools of its type. There are 229 pupils on roll, 120 boys and 109 girls in 8 classes. The total includes 26 children who attend the nursery on a full-time basis. Almost all of the pupils live in the immediate area, which suffers from a high level of unemployment. Although children enter the school with a wide variety of experiences, overall their level of attainment is below average when compared to children of a similar age.

About 15 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. The school has 17 pupils with special educational needs and none have a statement of special educational needs. Almost all are being supported effectively by the school and two have additional external support. This is well below the national average and represents a significant reduction from the previous inspection. There are only a very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. None of these pupils need any special support as all have a good understanding of English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. It received a School Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Skills for pupils' performance in the national tests last year, for example, St Alban's does not simply admit a child. When a child is registered with the school, the aim is to 'enfold' the whole family. As in a family, where all members are equally valued, great care is taken to meet the needs of individual pupils and recognise their achievements. The highly professional head teacher, supported most effectively by governors, staff and parents, provides excellent leadership. Together, all who work at the school have created a very special learning community where pupils feel happy and have a positive self-image. Teachers and governors regularly and carefully assess all aspects of school life. This helps to quickly identify areas for improvement and ensures that pupils have every opportunity to do well. The substantial amount of good teaching ensures that pupils attain above average standards in most subjects. When all these factors are taken into account, along with the average costs per pupil, the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The energy, commitment, expertise and leadership of the head teacher is the inspiration for everyone to do their best for the school. Governors and staff share his commitment to improvement and are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.
- The philosophy for learning, within the framework of the Catholic Church, the caring atmosphere and close partnership with parents, combine to create an effective learning environment enabling pupils to achieve above average standards in most subjects.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are well above those normally seen in primary schools. Computers are used very effectively to support pupils' learning in all subjects.
- The richness and breadth of the curriculum enables pupils to achieve very well, both in and outside of lessons.
- There are very good procedures to assess pupils' progress. Teachers use the information gained from assessment very well to plan their lessons. It makes teaching and learning effective and ensures pupils make very good progress.

- The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This has a major impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and on their behaviour.

What could be improved

- The provision for children's creative development in the Foundation Stage.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

St Alban's was described as a good school with many strengths in the previous report. The key features in 1998 were the way teachers, governors and parents worked together, the commitment to high standards and the Christian nature of the school. These and other strengths such as pupils' attitudes and their competency in using computers have been maintained and in some cases improved upon. As a result, standards continue to rise in line with the national trend. The three key issues raised in the previous report of January 1998 have also been improved. Standards in design and technology are at least satisfactory, pupils' work is for the most part neatly presented and the latest guidance for the geography curriculum has been successfully implemented. The recently adopted new handwriting scheme, for example, is helping to improve the neatness of pupils' written work. Governors take a keen interest in, and are fully involved with, school improvement and all staff are deeply committed to providing a worthwhile education for the pupils in their care. As a result, the overall level of improvement has been good. Parents are very appreciative and pupils really enjoy the wide range of interesting activities provided for them both in and out of the classroom. There has been a substantial improvement in teaching since the previous inspection. As a direct consequence, pupils show a very good attitude towards their learning and behave very well in school. This is ensuring standards improve steadily.

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
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	D	A	A
mathematics	C	C	A	A*
science	C	D	A	A

Key

Very high A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Standards in 2002 national tests for English, mathematics and science were well above the national average for pupils at the end of Year 6. The school's performance when compared to similar schools is very good and standards in English were well above the average attained in these schools. The standards attained in mathematics and science were in the highest five per cent nationally when compared with similar schools. Over the past four years the trend in improvement for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has been in line with that nationally. Overall standards

fluctuate from year to year because of the proportion of lower attaining pupils in each year group. In 2002, for example, the high standards were due in part to the fact that twice as many girls as boys did the national tests and girls tend to do better in these tests. However, boys also performed well, achieving better standards than most boys nationally. The level of improvement made by individual pupils in relation to their performance in the national tests when they were seven shows that girls as well as boys made good progress. By Year 6, pupils' progress from when they entered school is very good. In the current Year 6, pupils are on course to achieve the challenging targets set for them in English and mathematics in 2003. However, inspection evidence confirms that the standards likely to be achieved this year in national terms will be slightly lower in English, mathematics and science, being above rather than well above average. In ICT, standards are well above average.

The performance in the National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds in 2002, compared to all schools, was above average in reading, well above average in writing and in line with the average in mathematics. In writing and science, pupils' achievements were in the top five per cent nationally. Inspection evidence shows standards for pupils in Year 2 this year are above those expected for all aspects of English, mathematics and science. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from consistently effective teaching in most areas of their curriculum and are set to achieve nationally set targets, called Early Learning Goals well before they transfer to Year 1. However, the limited opportunities in the provision for their creative development, makes this a weaker aspect of the curriculum, and slow progress towards achieving this Early Learning Goal.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils love coming to school and are very enthusiastic in everything they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning. All are extremely friendly and well mannered. There has been no exclusions in the past two years.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils really care for one another. There are many opportunities for pupils to show initiative and responsibility both in and outside of lessons such as the 'buddy system' or school council.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils are punctual. Attendance figures are in line with the national average. There is evidence of a slight improvement this year.

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.

The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the previous inspection and meets the needs of all pupils effectively. Teaching is good throughout the school. In many lessons there are examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. All teachers

show enthusiasm for their work and a very strong commitment to raise standards. The basic skills in English and mathematics, for example, are taught very well. Teachers' caring and supportive relationship with their pupils means that all pupils feel valued and always try to do their best. Targets for learning are usually shared with pupils and they are given lots of opportunities for independence or to take responsibility for their own learning. The overall quality of learning is good. Pupils show much interest in their work, try extremely hard and have the maturity to concentrate on their work, even when not directly supervised by their teachers.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been carefully and thoughtfully implemented. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are fully included in lessons and receive good support, helping them to achieve their targets. The pupils with special talents in each class are identified, and in most lessons care is taken to ensure that they are sufficiently challenged. In the Foundation Stage, the overall quality of teaching is also good. However, there was a weakness in the teaching of children's creative development in the Reception class. The teacher's planning gave little emphasis to this area of the curriculum.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Statutory requirements are met. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities for all ages of pupils. Links with the local community, Catholic Church and other schools are good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Targets for learning are clearly defined in pupils' individual education plans and included in lesson planning. Good support is available from well-trained classroom support assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language.	Good. Close support is provided for these pupils in lessons. All understand English well and write it as well as other pupils. Every effort is made to encourage pupils to improve their spoken English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, overall. The Catholic faith is central to the ethos of the school. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The local culture and art, literature and music are promoted very well. Pupils are provided with a good understanding of the diversity in British society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school provides a very caring and secure environment for all pupils, making them feel safe and valued. Assessment procedures are very good.

Parents are very appreciative of the school and willingly give their full support. This is a strength, as the successful partnership considerably enhances pupils' learning and willingness to learn.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key	Very good. The excellent leadership of the head teacher inspires confidence and he has rightly earned the respect of everyone associated with the school. He is supported very well by the deputy

staff	head teacher and other key staff. All are totally committed to improving standards and the quality of education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors, led by an experienced and most able chair of governors, are active, well informed and very supportive. They are firmly committed to building on the school's excellent reputation in the local area.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There are detailed records on pupils' and teachers' performance. Co-ordinators annually undertake a full evaluation of their subject.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The finances are efficiently managed by the head teacher, ably supported by the conscientious administration staff. Best value is sought in all expenditure to secure continuous improvement.

Classroom support staff and nursery nurses make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. The spacious accommodation is continually being improved. The lack of hot and cold water in Reception causes problems in curriculum areas such as creative development. The overall cleanliness and condition of the floors are a credit to the hard-working caretaker and cleaners. Resources for ICT are exceptionally good with a well-used computer room and plenty of computers in the classrooms.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils like school and make good progress. • Behaviour is good and school helps pupils to become more mature and responsible. • Pupils get the right amount of homework. • Teaching is good and pupils are expected to work hard. • Parents are well informed about how their children are getting on. • The school is well led and managed. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching school and the school works closely with them. • The range of activities outside normal lessons. 	<p>There was no significant disagreement with any aspects of the questionnaire completed by parents prior to the inspection. This was also the case in the previous inspection, showing parents continue to be satisfied with all aspects of the school.</p>

There was a very good response to the inspection questionnaire. It was readily apparent at the meeting for parents prior to the inspection just how appreciative they are about all aspects of school life. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views about the school. It is a happy school and parents are right to be proud of its achievements.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The energy, commitment, expertise and leadership of the head teacher is the inspiration for everyone to do their best for the school. Governors and staff share his commitment to improvement and are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance.

1 The quality of leadership and management provided by the head teacher and deputy head teacher both appointed since the previous inspection, continues to be a strength of the school. The head teacher has conscientiously addressed all the key issues raised in the previous inspection and shown a strong determination to raise standards in all aspects of school life. His excellent leadership and extremely capable management are largely responsible for the school's success and its well-established reputation in the area. When the head teacher is working for the Local Education Authority to advise and assist other schools in ICT, the very capable deputy head teacher ensures that the school functions just as efficiently in his absence. Overall, leadership and management are very good.

2 The head teacher has a clear picture of what he wants to achieve for the benefit of the pupils and the community. As a direct result of his vision, experience, energy and leadership of the highest quality, the school has made a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. The higher proportion of good teaching, the introduction of a new handwriting scheme to improve the neatness of pupils' work and rising standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are some examples. In addition, his proven expertise in ICT, shared with staff and the way computers have become an integral part of pupils' learning have resulted in standards well above those expected of pupils of primary school age. Staff and governors share the head teacher's very strong commitment to the school and work hard in partnership with him to meet the clear and specific aims set out clearly in the school's prospectus. These aims and values are strongly influenced by the teaching of the Catholic Church and are reflected in all aspects of school life such as the pupils' very good attitudes to their work and their mature and sensible behaviour. There is an excellent atmosphere for learning in the school.

3 The delegation of responsibility to staff is a key feature of management. The approach is for all to work together on specific areas, identified for improvement through rigorous monitoring procedures. This promotes a feeling of unity as all staff work very effectively as a team, sharing responsibility to evaluate the school's performance and making changes should they be necessary. Like the head teacher, all staff constantly strive for high standards and implement a regular programme for analysing national test results and monitoring pupils' completed workbooks to evaluate the standards being achieved. The quality of teachers lesson planning is checked by subject co-ordinators and the head teacher on a weekly basis and each half term, an assessment is made of individual pupils' progress in each subject area. Last year, for example, staff highlighted the need for improvements in standards in writing and in investigative work in science. All agreed a course of action, ensuring that everyone took personal responsibility for making things better. The very good system for monitoring and evaluating teaching is a prime example of co-operation and teamwork to effect improvements.

4 Staff work closely together to co-ordinate the development of subjects within the curriculum, giving much support to one another. Subjects are tackled on a rota basis as outlined in the school improvement plan. The subject co-ordinators and the head teacher routinely observe lessons. They are then discussed and areas for improvement or training requirements are noted. This is very useful for quickly highlighting any areas of weakness. Detailed records are maintained of the evaluation of

these monitoring visits. These records provide an effective way of identifying areas for development and directing the collective energy of everyone to bring about change.

5 Classroom support staff feel part of the 'school team' and value the guidance and support they receive from teachers. The quality of their work for pupils with special educational needs and those who are experiencing difficulty with aspects such as reading adds significantly to the success of pupils' learning experiences. All are extremely conscientious and show a high level of commitment to pupils.

6 The governing body carries out its statutory duties very well and works hard to support the school. The chair of governors, is extremely knowledgeable and has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through regular weekly meetings with the head teacher. Individual governors accept responsibility for areas such as literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. This gives them a clear overview of learning in these areas. All approach their duties conscientiously and are proud to be associated with the school. Importantly, all appreciate the level of improvements brought about by the head teacher and express confidence in him. Meetings of the governing body are well attended and business is conducted efficiently. The statutory requirements for the special educational needs Code of Practice are met. However, there is not yet a governor to be responsible for the Foundation Stage.

7 The school office is run efficiently. Administration staff are friendly and welcoming, giving visitors an excellent first impression of the school. Very good use is made of new technology in the office, with an electronic mail facility and computer programs for managing the finances. The head teacher displays a keen entrepreneurial spirit and actively seeks out additional funding from a wide range of sources. An insurance firm helps to pay for residential visits, for example and a national bank matches school funds for specific improvements. Government grants for computers and for making improvements to the internal accommodation are used effectively and correctly. The school has a very favourable ratio of computers to pupils, for example, with one for every seven pupils. Plans are well advanced to provide more of the interactive computer linked whiteboards in the classrooms. The head teacher, ably supported by the chair of the finance committee, is meticulous in making sure that funds are applied to the best effect. Overall financial control is very good. The large contingency budget from the financial year beginning in 2001 has been reduced and is now well within acceptable limits. It has been used wisely to help maintain staffing levels and pay for major repairs to the roof and internal accommodation. The school buys its resources at the most competitive prices and pays careful attention to quality. The policy of appointing the best person for the job, reflects the governors determination to stick to the principles of best value. Parents' appreciation of the quality of the teaching staff gives justification to this policy.

8 The accommodation in a building, which was a former comprehensive school is very spacious. The caretaker and his cleaning staff do an excellent job keeping it well maintained and spotlessly clean. Like all staff, they willingly take on additional work within the school. The caretaker, for example washes and prepares all the fruit which is sold on a daily basis in the healthy eating tuck shop. Library facilities are good and a new computerised system for monitoring lending is proving to be efficient in keeping a check on book stocks, which are satisfactory. Resources are good, overall and very good for ICT.

9 This is a very successful school, with a well-deserved local reputation. It's success has also been recognised by the Department for Education and Skills with a School Achievement Award. Taking into account the way in which the school is led and managed, the standards being achieved, the good quality of teaching and pupils' very good attitudes, along with the average costs for each pupil, the school is providing very good value for money.

The philosophy for learning, within the framework of the Catholic Church, the caring atmosphere and close partnership with parents, combine to create an effective learning environment enabling pupils to achieve above average standards in most subjects.

10 The excellent ethos or atmosphere for learning, which exists in the school is created by many closely linked and successful aspects and like a chain, the links combine to make it a strength of the school. Much thought has gone into the aims of the school, set out in the school prospectus. There is a declared intention to value individual pupils and preserve their dignity at all costs since this dignity was created by God and is most precious to Him. Every child is promised love, care and respect. Equality of opportunity is explicit in all school documentation.

11 Parents are welcomed into the school family right from the start. The nursery teacher, for example, takes time each morning to talk to parents, giving herself time to do this by organising a wide range of interesting activities that hold children's attention as soon as they enter the classroom. Parents support for school and their appreciation for all that it is doing for their children was readily apparent from the response to the questionnaires and their comments at the meeting for parents prior to the inspection. During the inspection, this commitment was evident from the very good attendance at Year 5's class assembly. Typically, the caretaker and school secretary broke off from their busy routines to also attend.

12 Parent's confidence in the school and their open relationship with all staff has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school. Pupils value learning and respond exceptionally well to their teachers. All listen attentively and invariably try to complete tasks set for them. The quiet orderly atmosphere in all classes means that no time is wasted through teachers having to discipline anyone for inattention or silly behaviour. Teachers are able to concentrate on the specific aims for learning in each lesson and spend time supporting any pupils who are experiencing difficulty whilst the rest concentrate on their work. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs make very good progress.

13 Children are given a good start in the Nursery. All the lessons seen, for example, were very good. Good use is made of modern technology such as audio tape players; computers and the new computer linked whiteboard to effectively support their learning. Resources are very good and children have regular access to the attractive and well equipped outdoor area. Good links are made between the different areas of learning. In a physical education session in the large sports hall, for example, personal and social skills were encouraged as they worked in pairs or groups and showed a sound knowledge of plant growth as they pretended to be a tiny seed growing and stretching.

14 The good progress pupils make is continued in the Reception class. Children attain all the Early Learning Goals in the Foundation Stage curriculum well before the end of their reception year. Most begin the programmes of study in the National Curriculum after two terms in Reception. In an English lesson, for example, most were able to read confidently from the 'big book' text and complete simple sentences. Their letter formation and spelling were above average. When 'shopping' all could count objects and add prices up to 20 pence. Progress in their creative development is not as good as it is in other areas. This is due to a combination of factors such as the lack of emphasis in the teacher's planning, limited opportunities for role play situations and the infrequent use of the attractive outdoor area. However, all achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area before they leave the Reception class.

15 Pupils continue to do well in the infant and junior classes because of the effective teaching and their very good attitudes to learning. The performance in the National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds in 2002, compared to all schools, was above average in reading, well above average in

writing and in line with the average in mathematics. Inspection evidence shows standards for pupils in Year 2 this year are above those expected for all aspects of English, mathematics and science.

16 In 2002, Year 6 pupils did exceptionally well in the national tests for 11 year-olds. Standards in 2002 national tests for English, mathematics and science were well above the national average. The school's performance when compared to similar schools is very good and standards in English were well above the average attained in these schools. The standards attained in mathematics, for example, were in the highest five per cent nationally when compared with similar schools. The improvement trend for English, mathematics and science from 1998 has been in line with that nationally. Standards tend to fluctuate from year to year depending on the proportion of lower attaining pupils in each year group. In 2002, for example, the high standards were due in part to the fact that twice as many girls as boys did the national tests and national figures show that girls tend to do better in these tests. However, although the boys performed well, achieving better standards than boys did nationally, girls also did well. The level of improvement of individual pupils in relation to their performance in the national tests when they were seven-year-olds shows that all pupils made good progress. By Year 6, pupils' progress from the below average level on entry is very good. In the current Year 6, pupils are on course to achieve the challenging targets set for them in English and mathematics in 2003. However, inspection evidence confirms that the standards likely to be achieved this year in national terms will be slightly lower in English, mathematics and science, being above rather than well above average.

17 Pupils' completed work in English shows that lessons are well organised and firmly based on the National Literacy Strategy. Teachers plan tasks that are closely matched to the different abilities of pupils and good use is made of computers to support pupils' learning. In one Year 2 lesson seen in the computer room, for example, pupils analysed the different sections of a story or revised the index for a non-fiction book. This involved them in reading the text carefully and discussing ideas before using the computer to make changes. By Year 6, pupils read and write competently. The school's analysis of their performance in the national tests highlighted the need for greater focus on purpose and organisation in their writing. In a successful lesson seen, where pupils were preparing for the 2003 national tests the week after the inspection, they were revising these two aspects. The previous inspection raised concerns about the neatness and presentation of pupils' written work. Although there has been much improvement, some pupils in some classes still produce work that is untidy and shows a lack of care. Some older boys in particular still print rather than use a joined up style, adopted recently by the school for all pupils to use.

18 In mathematics, Year 2 pupils cover all the work expected for this age group and progress for all pupils is good. Teacher assessments carefully track the progress that individual pupils make, confirming the good progress. By Year 6, pupils handle data confidently, solve numerical problems involving four figure numbers and have a good knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages. Good use is made of computers in mathematics lessons. In Year 3, for example, pupils use a 'Ghostblaster' program to sharpen their mental mathematics skills and then a program to reinforce money calculations. Year 4 pupils are helped in their understanding of metric measures by displays on the large computer linked whiteboard before using specific programs themselves on the computers.

19 Science is taught well, with a good emphasis on enabling pupils of all ages to investigate and conduct experiments by themselves. By Year 2, pupils have completed topics on electrical circuits, forces, health and growth and classifying materials. In the junior classes, good links are made between science and other subjects. In Year 3, for example, describing and grouping rocks by their characteristics involves skills from literacy sessions and aspects of geography. Year 5 investigated the effect of exercise on muscles and used computers to complete worksheets. All enjoyed using pulse rate meters and stop watches to measure their heart rate after vigorous exercise. By Year 6, pupils

show advanced computer skills as they handle and process data from investigations into forces such as air resistance on falling objects.

Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are well above those normally seen. Computers are used very effectively to support pupils' learning in all subjects.

20 The undoubted expertise of the head teacher is a driving force in this subject and is largely responsible for the high standards being achieved by pupils of all ages. In ICT, the well above average standards reflect the greatly improved level of resources, the generally good quality of teaching and the way computers are used as an integral part of pupils learning in all subjects. Teachers provide pupils with a wide range of challenging experiences. Year 6 pupils, for example, are currently preparing a graphic presentation incorporating sounds, images and voice-overs for younger pupils. The presentation provided information on a mountainous region in the United Kingdom. All pupils have regular access to the computer room and this means that pupils have lots of opportunities to practise their computer skills or to work independently on computers. Parents, at their meeting prior to the inspection, reported that they were happy about the opportunities for pupils to use computers. Inspectors agree with these views. The ratio of one computer for every seven pupils is much better than in other primary schools.

21 By the age of seven, for example, Year 2 pupils are able to load programs into the computer unaided and are familiar with the functions of the various keys. They change font size, use capital letters and print their work. All demonstrate good control of the mouse when selecting options in programs. In the Year 2 English lesson seen, pupils analysed features of stories and non-fiction texts in the computer room. Good use was made of computers and the interactive whiteboard to revise a non-fiction glossary or edit a story text. Pupils were able to retrieve and display successfully information about creatures that live under the sea.

22 By Year 6, pupils show confidence when using computers and all concentrate well on given tasks such as retrieving information from the Internet, creating a database or adding sound effects to multi-media presentations. In the computer room, they work conscientiously in pairs, helping one another sensibly. Year 4 pupils, for example, all manage to produce a database to list natural and living things found on a beach. Year 5 pupils collect information about rivers as part of their geography topic and Year 6 also have a geography focus as they prepare their power-point presentation. All pupils display skills that are well above those normally seen for their age group.

23 Teachers' make sure that skills are taught effectively from the time pupils enter the school in the Nursery. Opportunities are carefully planned for pupils to use computers to support their learning in most subjects. ICT skills were used well in the geography lessons seen, for example, and pupils often use computers in science, and to practice their literacy and numeracy skills. The quality of teaching is good throughout with most teachers being sufficiently skilled to sort out any problems that arise with the computer programs and all are able to effectively use the latest interactive whiteboard technology. Plans are well advanced to introduce a computer-linked whiteboard into each classroom, showing the school's commitment to continue improving ICT opportunities for pupils.

The richness and breadth of the curriculum enables pupils to achieve very well, both in and outside of lessons.

24 Since the previous inspection, the school has considerably improved the quality of the curriculum on offer to pupils. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and its breadth and balance is another strength of the school. The weaknesses noted in the previous inspection in the planning for geography have been resolved. Each subject now has detailed programmes to guide

teachers' planning. All National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught effectively and there is very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, including special lessons to discuss social and moral issues as well as teaching programmes to cover sex and drugs education. Promoting responsibility and citizenship feature strongly.

25 The quality and range of learning opportunities in the Foundation Stage are good, overall. This was also the case in the previous inspection. Teachers' plans show good coverage of the areas of learning recommended for this age group. However, there is some duplication in skills in the Nursery and Reception class, where liaison between the two teachers is not as effective as it could be. In the Nursery, children get a very good start to their schooling due to the interesting and exciting learning opportunities available to them. They have access to two computers and one of the new computer linked whiteboards for example, as well as the attractive outdoor play area and a wide range of play equipment and construction kits. This very good start is built on effectively in the Reception class. A high priority is given to teaching the basic skills in communication, language and literacy, and numeracy, as well as to pupils' personal, social and emotional development. However, provision for children's creative development is not as effective as it might be due to a lack of emphasis in the teacher's planning, affecting provision. Integrating aspects of the National Curriculum with the Early Learning Goals is a very effective way of ensuring that the transition from one to the other is seamless. Access to a spacious outdoor play area further enhances children's opportunities for their physical development as well as supporting all other areas of learning. As a result, many achieve the national targets called the Early Learning Goals in all areas of the curriculum well before they leave their Reception year.

26 The school has adopted the latest national guidance for all subjects. The curriculum plan sets out very clearly when each unit of work will be taught and for how long. In each subject, the designated co-ordinator monitors planning termly and regularly samples pupils' work to check that teachers are teaching to the planned organisation of units of work. By this means, any inconsistencies affecting the quality of teaching and learning can be quickly corrected.

27 The school's emphasis on literacy and numeracy is good and the National Strategies have been carefully implemented. The very good attitude of most pupils and their very good behaviour in lessons ensures that they remain attentive. There are effective links between subjects with, for example, literacy skills being used well in geography as pupils write for their power point presentations on mountainous areas, and numeracy skills developing soundly in science as data on temperatures is recorded.

28 Booster classes for Year 6 pupils were held during the Easter break as a means of raising standards. These were well attended and show the commitment not only of teachers but also of pupils to improve. These booster sessions are intended to have a significant impact on the school's overall performance in the national tests and are used successfully.

29 The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The emphasis is on early and accurate identification and intervention, and all pupils on the school's special educational needs register receive additional support from the learning support assistants. The curriculum provided for pupils is closely linked to the targets in their individual education plans and to the National Curriculum. The good quality of teachers' speech in most lessons is a key factor in enabling pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language to take a full part in the life of the school, both in and outside the classroom. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from the close support of their teachers or classroom support assistants. These pupils understand English well and have no difficulty with writing or spelling. Teachers are aware of the reluctance of one or two of these pupils to speak English and find ways to

encourage speech whenever they can. Role-play situations in the class shop are a typical example for younger pupils.

30 The curriculum is designed to enable pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to have equal access to learning opportunities and in this, the school is most successful. The school does well to make a clear distinction between pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. It has a strong commitment to, and is successful in, achieving equal opportunities for all its pupils. The school is well aware of the diverse social and emotional needs of its pupils as well as their academic needs and so is able to meet these through the taught and extended curriculum.

31 The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils of all ages. These include the chance to learn how to play musical instruments such as recorders, guitars or violins and to take part in a range of sporting activities. Younger pupils from Reception to Year 2 have a board games club, which is very popular. Older pupils have freedom of access to the computers in the computer room each lunchtime. The wide variety of activities offer valuable opportunities for pupils to socialise with each other and to develop relationships with one another and their teachers. A good range of educational visits, including a residential visit for pupils in Year 6 to Holy Island, further enrich the curriculum, giving pupils opportunities to learn from first-hand experiences. The school successfully extends the curriculum through its well-established links with the community, including close links with the church and other local schools. It is these strengths within the extended curriculum that play a significant part in the very good provision for pupils' personal development. This is a positive feature of the school's provision that has been strengthened since the previous inspection.

Very good procedures exist to assess pupils' progress. Teachers use assessment information very well to plan their lessons. It makes teaching and learning effective and ensures pupils make very good progress.

32 The careful assessment of pupils' progress is a key strength as it enables teachers to sharply focus on learning skills relevant to individual pupils. This ensures that learning is progressive and effective. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and the progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and all other subjects are very good. This represents an improvement from the previous inspection when it was found that the assessment in all the non-core subjects was not systematic. From Years 1 to 6, there is a range of formal systems for testing pupils' learning. The school makes effective use of ICT to analyse the data and look for trends that may affect future attainment. As a result of this analysis, the school has been able to identify any weaknesses and quickly put into place strategies that will, given time, address these. As a result of the information gained by formal testing and the regular marking of pupil's work, pupils are given targets to improve their performance in reading and writing. Some pupils also have individual targets on personal development. Good home-school links are made as parents are informed of their child's targets and are therefore able to help their children achieve them.

33 Teachers throughout the school use a good range of end of term tests and national tests to constantly monitor their pupils and use this information to plan lessons well matched to their abilities. This helps to ensure that teaching is effective and all pupils make good progress in their learning. The very good assessment procedures reflect the school's inclusion policy, where the school constantly aims to provide a meaningful and useful curriculum for all pupils, whatever their ability. All subjects of the curriculum are assessed at the end of each unit of work. Very good records are kept and monitored by subject co-ordinators and head teacher. This information is then used to give targeted support to those pupils who need extra help, by being taught in smaller groups on different tasks. This

supports those pupils who have special educational needs and also enables the school to identify those pupils who achieve higher standards and who may need additional and more challenging work.

34 As a result of the detailed information available to teachers from assessment, the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, with more very good and excellent examples of teaching seen. All teachers show enthusiasm for their work and a very strong commitment to raise standards. The basic skills in English and mathematics, for example, are taught very well. Teachers' caring and supportive relationship with their pupils means that all pupils feel valued and always try to do their best. Targets for learning are usually shared with pupils and they are given lots of opportunities for independence or to take responsibility for their own learning. The overall quality of learning is good, enabling pupils to make very good progress by the time they leave the school. Pupils show much interest in their work, try extremely hard and have the maturity to concentrate on their work, even when not directly supervised by their teachers.

The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This has a major impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and on their behaviour.

35 In the previous inspection, this aspect was reported as good, overall. One important factor responsible for the improvement is the broad, balanced and at times exciting curriculum. It supports pupils' personal development just as well as their academic progress. Although there is a strong emphasis on raising standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, teachers have not lost sight of the importance of all other subjects in the National Curriculum. For example, the provision for music is good and pupils get plenty of opportunities to work and perform together, enhancing their social development. The extra-curricular provision is also a strength, particularly for sporting activities. For example, during the inspection, pupils were practising each lunchtime for a forthcoming cross-country competition.

36 Very good moral and social values are implicitly communicated to pupils in such a natural way that all pupils respond to the very high expectations of them and behave impeccably in school. Many examples of pupils working together and supporting one another were seen during lessons. This has a direct impact on the quality of learning in every class as pupils display very good attitudes to one another and to their work. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good, the local culture being promoted very well. The school has little cultural variation amongst the pupils but all show a clear understanding of some of the major religions in the world such as Hinduism. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to visit different places of worship and visits to the school by non-white people are infrequent. However, the range and quality of books and artefacts associated with the different cultures and faiths, which exist in Britain today have been increased significantly to fully raise pupils' awareness of the different cultures and traditions in society.

37 The previous inspection found that pupils' attitudes were positive and they were enthusiastic about their learning. Behaviour was good. The current pupils have maintained the keenness to learn and behaviour is very good. In most lessons pupils displayed a very good attitude to their learning and in one Year 6 lesson, this was excellent. These pupils were preparing for the national tests for 11 year-olds and displayed a maturity beyond their years as they revised aspects that they knew they needed to. All pupils are keen to take part in the wide range of activities available and willingly engage adults in conversation about their work. They love coming to school and approach their work with a genuine commitment and desire to learn.

38 Almost every parent who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their child likes coming to school. Virtually all agreed that the school is helping their child to become more mature. This confidence is well placed. During lessons, pupils of all ages quickly settle down to work

and persevere with things they find difficult. They listen carefully to their teacher and are proud of their completed work. For example, in a Year 4 design and technology lesson, pupils were keen to show the template they had cut out to make a purse and discuss their designs with inspectors.

39 Pupils' behaviour is very good, not only in lessons but throughout the school day. They are friendly and outgoing and get along exceptionally well with members of staff and with each other. Pupils of all ages mix freely and during lessons are well-mannered and polite. All members of staff lead by example and address the pupils with the respect and consideration they deserve. Pupils respond similarly and their very good attitude to learning helps to create a lively and vibrant working atmosphere. Pupils listen carefully during lessons and usually wait their turn to answer their teacher's questions. Their behaviour during lunchtimes and playtimes is every bit as good and there is a pleasant family atmosphere in the playground with older pupils looking after younger ones. A measure of how mature and sensible pupils are was shown as they sold fruit during morning break or used the computer room at lunchtimes.

40 The school has a very successful policy of social and educational inclusion and all pupils play energetically and happily together. Bullying, racism or other anti-social behaviour is extremely rare and any such incidents are dealt with firmly and very effectively. Teachers, whenever possible, encourage pupils to resolve their own differences. Throughout the school there is a strong sense of community, and relationships between pupils and with members of staff are very good. This helps to create an excellent atmosphere in school. There have been no fixed-term exclusions during the last school year.

41 Pupils' personal development is very good. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are widespread, helping them to become mature and confident. Nursery children, for example, all willingly helped to tidy away equipment and were able to get themselves ready for a physical development session in the sports hall. Personal, social, health education and citizenship lessons effectively teach pupils about growing up, healthy foods, sex and drugs. All pupils are fully included in any special activities such as visits to places of interest or residential visits. Within each class, pupils willingly undertake a wide range of responsibilities, such as acting as monitors and helping to give out equipment. Pupils are independent and work very well on their own and in small groups. This was evident in a science lesson in the Year 5 and 6 class where pupils worked in groups to devise an investigation linking pulse rate to exercise. When required to do so, pupils can be relied upon to get on with their work and to complete any homework that is set.

42 Attendance rates reflect the very good attitudes most pupils have towards school. Overall, attendance is satisfactory, being in line with that seen in most schools nationally. There are very good procedures to monitor and promote attendance. For example, a group of pupils were given certificates for full attendance in an assembly during the inspection and there was no unauthorised absence last year showing parents support the school's efforts. Close monitoring shows only 16 pupils had less than 90 per cent attendance and seven were below 80 per cent.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The provision for children's creative development in the Foundation Stage.

43 The inspection took place in the third school term and by this time, in the Reception class, most children had attained the Early Learning Goals in five of the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage curriculum. Lessons observed in this class were more formal as children worked on the programmes of study in the National Curriculum. Parents and governors value the preparation given to all pupils in Reception. The quality of teaching ensures that children have a firm foundation on

which to build their future learning. However, the good progress children make in their creative development in the Nursery tails off in the Reception class mainly because of this more formal approach to learning. As a result, it takes children longer to achieve all the Early Learning Goals in this area of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

44 In the afternoon session in the Reception class, a range of activities is planned under the heading of creative development. These activities are very much teacher directed, limiting opportunities for children to be independent or to use their own imagination. Children had to wash their hands in buckets of water after painting or using modelling materials, for example, rather than being allowed to use the nearby cloakroom with its ten sinks. The lack of running hot or cold water is an added restriction on children's creative development.

45 The teacher's planning for the Reception class children shows that the very attractive and well-equipped outdoor area is used only once or twice each week, mainly for physical development. This means that children have limited opportunities to build on the experience gained from daily use of the outdoor area when they were in the Nursery. Furthermore, little evidence was seen of computers being used to support the children's learning in all areas of learning. However, the class computer is used well on occasions to enable children to gain keyboard skills. For example, children who speak English as an additional language were supported by other pupils when completing sentences using a computer program.

46 Much has been achieved in the development of the Foundation Stage of learning for the youngest pupils in school. Nursery and Reception provide a happy and caring learning environment for children of all abilities, meeting their individual needs well. However, there is too little emphasis given to the Reception children's creative development to improve their rate of progress in this important area of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

47 It was apparent from the quality of the documentation provided for the inspection team and the information it contained, that the school had many strengths and few areas for development. In order to maintain the high standards and further improve the quality of education, the head teacher, governors and staff should;

ensure that children in the Foundation Stage have more opportunities to develop their creative skills by;

- providing hot and cold running water in the Reception classroom
- making daily use of the very good outdoor play area to promote learning in all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum
- giving children more freedom to participate in role play situations
- ensuring that all the resources provided for ICT in the Reception class are used effectively. (Paragraphs 6, 14, 25, 43-46)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	10	6	0	0	0
Percentage	4	29	42	25	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than four percentage points.

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)	26	203
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	33

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	16

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	13	14	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	12
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	26	27	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96% (94%)	100% (94%)	96% (94%)
	National	84% (84%)	86% (86%)	90% (91%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	13
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	26	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96% (97%)	96% (97%)	100% (97%)
	National	85% (85%)	89% (89%)	89% (89%)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	18	34	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	18
	Girls	33	34	34
	Total	49	51	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94% (60%)	98% (83%)	100% (93%)
	National	75% (75%)	73% (71%)	86% (87%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	17	14
	Girls	32	34	30
	Total	47	51	44
Percentage of pupils	School	94% (63%)	98% (77%)	100% (88%)

at NC level 4 or above	National	73% (72%)	74% (74%)	82% (82%)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	180	0	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, 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)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	29.2

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	85

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2002
£	
Total income	547,843
Total expenditure	524,755
Expenditure per pupil	2,050
Balance brought forward from previous year	55,078
Balance carried forward to next year	78,166

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	229
Number of questionnaires returned	133

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	40	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	28	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	39	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	41	6	2	3
The teaching is good.	70	29	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	61	36	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	32	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	17	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	59	39	2	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	71	27	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	65	33	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	31	3	2	2