

INSPECTION REPORT

**HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY AIDED PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Wallsend

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108623

Headteacher: Mrs A M Burns

Lead inspector: Mr A J Dobell

Dates of inspection: 17th to 20th May 2004

Inspection number: 256478

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	360
School address:	Coniston Road Wallsend Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE28 0EP
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Mallon
Date of previous inspection:	May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This large primary school draws its pupils mainly from the surrounding area. This consists mainly of local authority housing, and the community experiences high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Children's attainment and learning skills when they enter the Nursery cover a wide range, but are well below average overall. Most pupils are from white western European backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.

The school has 360 pupils on roll with 46 attending the Nursery part time. There are 52 pupils in the Reception classes making a full time equivalent of 75 in the Foundation Stage. There are 78 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs and, at 23 per cent, this is above average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (1.2 per cent) is below average. The nature of special educational needs includes specific learning difficulties, moderate and severe learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech and communication difficulties and hearing impairment. The number of pupils leaving and joining the school at other than the normal time (five per cent) is below average. Over the last three years, the school has gained the Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People status, a School Achievement Award, and a School Curriculum Award. The school benefits from being a member of an Education Action Zone.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10373	Mr A J Dobell	Lead inspector	Mathematics, Music, Physical education.
19374	Mrs W Sheehan	Lay inspector	
22454	Mrs M Farman	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage, Science, Information and communication technology, Art and design, Design and technology.
21910	Mr G Longton	Team inspector	Special educational needs, English as an additional language, English, Geography, History.

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	11
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	17
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	20
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	34

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school giving very good value for money. Children enter the Nursery with standards which are well below average but which cover a wide range. They achieve very well in the Foundation Stage and go on to achieve well and make good progress in Years 1 to 6. The quality of teaching is very good overall, with about four lessons in ten being very good or excellent. Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership and is continually seeking ways to improve the school further. The school has improved very well since its previous inspection and the key issues from that inspection have been dealt with well.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's excellent leadership, with very good support from her deputy and all her colleagues, ensures that all pupils are valued, gain in confidence and self-esteem, and so achieve well.
- Very good teaching throughout the school results in very effective learning.
- Pupils' very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour in and out of class are rooted in the very good relationships which exist throughout the school.
- There is very good provision for children in the Foundation Stage and for pupils who have special educational needs, and good provision for those who speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils' personal development is very good as a result of the very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and for their personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- Pupils are very well cared for and so feel safe and secure in the school.
- Standards in spelling are below average, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- The school has very good links with parents and partner schools, and good links with its local community.
- Governors provide the school with effective support.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	D	C	E	E*
Mathematics	E	E	D	E
Science	D	D	E	E

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E - in the bottom five per cent.*

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Achievement is good overall. Children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage and are likely to achieve, and in some cases to exceed, the goals that children are expected to reach by the end of the Reception Year. Pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well in Years 1 to 6. Standards have risen overall in recent years and are now average at the end of the Reception Year, Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 declined in 2003. This was partly the result of extensive staff absence during the school year 2002-03, and partly because an above average proportion of pupils in Years 2 and 6 in 2002-03 had special educational needs. In most years, pupils achieve at a satisfactory level in comparison with schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. Standards are likely to improve in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2004. Since the school's previous inspection, standards in information and communication technology have improved well and are now average.

Pupils' personal qualities are very good. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well both in and out of class. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.** These very good attitudes are rooted in the school's strong Roman Catholic ethos. Attendance is above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are very good overall throughout the school. Teachers work hard to provide interesting learning activities and, in most lessons, pupils put a good deal of effort into learning. Support staff are few in number but the few in place are very effective in supporting learning. Assessment is used well to promote achievement by making pupils aware of what they need to do next to raise their standards.

The quality of the curriculum is very good throughout the school and there are very good opportunities for enrichment in activities out of class. Information and communication technology is used very well to support learning and effective links are made between subjects to make learning more relevant. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support and the few pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well. The school provides very good levels of care so that pupils feel secure and achieve well. There are very good links with parents and other schools and these support learning very effectively. Pupils benefit well from the school's membership of the local Education Action Zone.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher is providing excellent leadership. She has a very clear vision for the school and a very clear commitment to continuing improvement. She is very well supported by her deputy and all her colleagues. She creates very effective teams and all adults in the school work together with an impressive unity of purpose. The school's commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity is excellent. Management is very good. The school is very evaluative and acts very effectively on the information that it receives from analysing its performance. Planning for improvement is clearly thought through and staff training is focused on promoting improvement. Financial management is very efficient and the principles of best value are applied very effectively. Governors, led by their shrewd and experienced chair, have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and ensure that the school meets its legal requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils hold the school in very high regard. Both the parents' meeting and returns in the parents' and pupils' questionnaires were very positive about the school and what it provides. Typical of parents' comments at the meeting was 'the headteacher does a wonderful job as does the governing body and parent-teacher association'. In discussion, pupils were polite, sensible, open, and proud of their school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- reinforce strategies to improve the accuracy of pupils' spelling, especially in Years 3 to 6.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is very good in the Foundation Stage and good in Years 1 to 6, regardless of gender and level of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Standards are average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology at the end of Years 2 and 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in the Foundation Stage, so children are likely to reach, and, in some cases, to exceed the standards expected nationally by the end of the Reception Year.
- Standards have risen overall over the last few years and are likely to rise again in the national tests in 2004.
- Weaknesses in spelling are impairing standards, especially in English.
- Pupils achieve well in attaining average standards in information and communication technology.
- Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Standards are improving well and pupils achieve well because the headteacher, very well supported by her colleagues, has a very strong commitment to raising attainment.

Commentary

1. In the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003, standards were below average in reading and well below average in writing and mathematics. Teacher assessments in science showed standards to be well below average. When compared with similar schools, standards were average in reading, below average in writing, and well below average in mathematics. These results are lower than those achieved in the previous three years. This was largely because over one third of the pupils in this year group were on the school's register of special educational needs, and teaching and learning were adversely affected by extended periods of absence of key staff. However, since children enter the Nursery with standards and learning skills which are well below average, these results still represent satisfactory achievement.
2. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003, standards were well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics. When compared with schools which obtain similar results in the tests at the end of Year 2 in 1999, these results were very low in English and well below average in mathematics and science. These results showed a marked decline in English, a slight decline in science and a slight improvement in mathematics since the previous year. Again, over 30 per cent of the pupils in this year group were on the school's register of special educational needs, and learning was adversely affected by long periods of staff absence. These absences included the headteacher, the Year 6 teacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator. Although the similar schools grades imply that pupils did not make enough progress, inspectors looked in more detail at the issue. Inspectors studied the progress each individual pupil had made since their Year 2 SATS. The expectation is that pupils move on 2 levels (12 points) over the 4 years. They found that the majority of pupils achieved this, so judged achievement to be satisfactory.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.1 (16.1)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	13.2 (14.4)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	14.6 (15.7)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 52 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	23.8 (26.6)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	25.7 (25.2)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	27.4 (27.6)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 50 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Children enter the Nursery with levels of knowledge and learning skills which are well below the national average. Very good teaching and very effective support enable children to achieve very well in the Foundation Stage and to make very good progress in all areas of learning. Teachers and support staff have a very good appreciation of how young children learn and plan exciting and stimulating learning activities. As a result, children join in the range of activities with impressive enthusiasm. Their progress is carefully assessed, so that the next stage of learning can build systematically on what they already know and understand. As a result, children are likely to reach the standards expected nationally in the early learning goals for the age group in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world, and to exceed them in personal, social and emotional development, physical development and creative development. This represents very good achievement, and children get a very good start to their education.
- Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 to 6. Standards have risen overall over the last five years in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6, but worsened overall in 2003 for the reasons given above. The school's assessments and evidence from the inspection suggest that the upward trend will be resumed in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2004. Pupils' good progress results from good teaching which is carefully planned to challenge different groups of pupils at different stages of learning. The information from assessments of pupils' progress is used well to identify areas of uncertainty so that future learning can be planned to address them. Pupils' good achievement is underpinned by this careful management of their learning.
- Spelling is an area of weakness, particularly for pupils in Years 3 to 6, and is depressing standards, notably in English. Pupils do not pay enough attention to correct spelling and tend to spell words as they pronounce them. For example, one pupil wrote 'slipas' because that was how he pronounced 'slippers', and failed to notice that the word was spelt correctly on a display on the wall to his right. Similarly, there are examples of words in science, such as evaporation, being inaccurately copied. The school has an initiative in place to improve spelling in Years 1 and 2 and this is having a positive effect. However, it has not yet had time to improve spelling in Years 3 to 6, and the headteacher recognises that this is an issue which requires attention. There are examples of creative writing of good quality throughout the school.
- Standards in information and communication technology are average at the end of Years 2 and 6 and pupils achieve well in this subject. This is a marked improvement since the previous inspection and is the result of improvements in the quantity and quality of resources. In

particular, the school now has a computer suite and an increasing number of computer-driven whiteboards. Further, teachers' confidence and competence in teaching the subject have improved well. Information and communication technology is now used well to support learning in other subjects. Similarly, standards in design and technology, which were a cause for concern at the time of the previous inspection, have improved well throughout the school.

7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school and they make good progress towards the targets identified in their individual education plans. Their learning is managed very efficiently and they are given full access to the curriculum and encouraged to play a full part in learning. They know that they are valued for what they can contribute and, as a result, their personal development is very good. Support staff give very effective assistance when they are available. However, the school has relatively few support staff for its size and there is frequently no support available for the large classes in Years 3 to 6. This means that groups of pupils at different stages of learning are competing for the teacher's attention and support. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 at the end of Year 2 and level 5 at the end of Year 6 is increasing. This means that higher attaining pupils are being challenged well. The school is aware of the need to continue to do this. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well and achieve well.
8. The headteacher, fully supported by her deputy and all adults in the school, has introduced a number of initiatives to raise standards and these are gradually becoming effective. As a result of these, and the very good care that pupils receive and their very good attitudes to learning, pupils achieve well, and the school has strategies in place to raise standards further.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal development is very good as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attitudes and behaviour are very good, while attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good which means that they behave very well both in and out of class.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Relationships are very good and pupils' efforts are valued by all adults.
- Children in the Foundation Stage quickly develop very positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes to school.

Commentary

9. The school has an excellent ethos and climate for learning in which pupils flourish and develop. Pupils mature and grow in confidence and self-esteem as they progress through the school due to the very good promotion of their personal development. As a result, most pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They settle quickly in class and are very keen to respond to questions and participate in discussions. They support each other very well in paired and group work. For example, in a Year 4 art and design lesson, pupils were happy to help each other to improve their techniques of blending. Behaviour in classes is very good and lessons proceed at a brisk pace with minimal interruption. At the breakfast club and at lunchtimes pupils are polite to adults and a harmonious atmosphere exists. They live in a secure and supportive environment and very rare instances of bullying or other forms of harassment, including racial harassment, are carefully and quickly managed and resolved. In discussion, both parents and pupils confirmed that the school handles these issues very well. No pupils have been excluded from the school since its previous inspection.
10. There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies are used very effectively to promote moral messages and opportunities to meditate are included sensitively. Pupils' work is celebrated in class and in assemblies, which helps to

develop their self-esteem. Very good opportunities are created in lessons for pupils to understand the lives of others. For example, the story of a Kenyan boy in a Year 4 geography lesson provided pupils with a good opportunity to reflect on the traumas and successes in other people's lives. Pupils have a very secure understanding of the difference between right and wrong and a very clear appreciation of the possible impact that their behaviour might have on others. Social skills are developed very effectively so that relationships between different age groups and between boys and girls are very good. For example, older pupils willingly help out in the playground with younger pupils and carry out their prefect roles with pride. Pupils have a very good appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions especially through topics in art and religious education. This provision promotes pupils' very good personal development very effectively.

11. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good and are based on mutual respect. In discussion with pupils from the school council, they said 'you can chat to the teachers about life, anything'. In lessons, for example a Year 5 science lesson, pupils collaborated well to discuss and sort medicines into safe and harmful categories. The discussions were lively, frank and open and helped pupils to learn very effectively. Pupils who have joined the school at different times during the year are pleased with the way that they are able to make friends quickly. Teachers take time to talk to pupils and, in lessons, all answers are treated with respect. Pupils are courteous and friendly to visitors, for example, by holding doors open for them, and taking the opportunity to chat politely.
12. Children settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes because of the very effective induction arrangements and the sensitive way in which they are treated. They quickly gain in confidence and self-esteem and join eagerly in the class routines. They respond well to the school's high expectations of behaviour and co-operation and quickly learn to approach their activities with enthusiasm. This is because they know that they will be interesting and that their work will be valued. The children's personal development is very good. They are likely to achieve and, in most cases, exceed the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development. This represents very good achievement.
13. Pupils with special educational needs have very good attitudes to school because of the way in which they are valued. They are very well integrated into the school community. They are willing to ask for help, confident that they will be taken seriously. The very good level of support that they receive has a significant effect on their self-esteem and, as a result, on their achievement.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.4
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Very good teaching in the Foundation Stage results in very good achievement. Very good teaching in Years 1 to 6 enables pupils to achieve well. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and this is a good improvement since the previous inspection. The school's very good curriculum is innovative with the headteacher and her colleagues continually seeking new ways to make learning interesting. Pupils are very well cared for and their learning is supported by good systems for assessing and tracking their progress. Links with parents and other schools are very good, and there are good links with the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall. Systems for assessing pupils' progress are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching in the Foundation Stage results in very good achievement.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects of the curriculum.
- Throughout the school, pupils are presented with very interesting learning activities which offer them high levels of challenge.
- The school sets very high standards for behaviour and effort.
- The headteacher and her senior colleagues monitor teaching and learning very carefully to ensure that they are of good quality.
- Assessment is used well to make learning effective.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 54 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	21 (39%)	31 (57%)	1 (2%)	0	0	0

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

14. The quality of teaching is very good overall with pupils' learning being planned and supported very effectively. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. In all lessons, learning was at least satisfactory and was mostly good or very good. This is a good improvement on the previous inspection.
15. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good overall. Teachers and support staff work very effectively together as a team to create a wide range of stimulating and interesting learning activities. As a result, children settle quickly into class routines, thoroughly enjoy their activities and develop into enthusiastic learners who put a very good amount of effort into their work because their interest is engaged so effectively. As a result, they make very good, rapid progress and achieve very well. Their progress is assessed very effectively and great care is taken to plan future learning, to enable them to build systematically on what they know, understand and can do. They benefit from a very good start to their education and are in a good position to start work on the National Curriculum when they join Year 1.
16. In Years 1 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well because teachers have a very good command of the subjects of the National Curriculum. For example, when the school was inspected previously, there were concerns about teaching and learning in information and communication technology and design and technology. The school took these concerns seriously so teaching and learning in information and communication technology are now good. No judgement is possible on teaching and learning in design and technology, but evidence from work on display and discussions with pupils suggest that these have improved well. Teachers routinely use time and resources well and plan effectively, thereby enabling pupils to build on previous learning. As a result, they make good progress and achieve well.
17. The school's excellent ethos means that all pupils are valued and given very good encouragement to succeed. Throughout the school, teachers prepare very interesting learning activities which engage pupils' attention and motivate them so that they work with sustained interest and concentration. Pupils at different stages of learning are given suitable levels of challenge, which enable them to achieve well. For example, pupils with special educational needs are identified early. Class teachers then write individual education plans for them,

together with the co-ordinator for special educational needs, and together they determine what support is needed. Targets in individual education plans are shared with pupils and short steps are planned, so that pupils quickly see that they are making progress and are thus encouraged to try hard with their learning. Class teachers work hard with these pupils and, in some classes, they receive effective assistance from support staff. Overall, support staff are very effective, particularly in providing specialist support to individual pupils with particular needs and in teaching literacy support programmes to identified groups. However, the number of support staff is relatively small for a school of this size and parents commented on this. The provision of support in the large classes in Years 3 to 6 is relatively rare and this restricts the amount of support that teachers can give to different groups.

18. Teachers set high standards for pupils' behaviour and effort and, in most classes, this results in effective learning and good achievement because learning activities are interesting, pupils put a good amount of effort into their learning, are co-operative and have very good attitudes to learning. Very good behaviour means that teachers can concentrate on maximising pupils' learning. This means that pupils have very good equality of access to the curriculum and this underpins their good achievement. For example, the use of additional help for the few pupils who speak English as an additional language enables them to participate fully in learning and make good progress.
19. Teaching and learning are very effective because the headteacher and her senior colleagues provide very effective support. They monitor teachers' termly and weekly planning to ensure that the National Curriculum is covered. They also, along with subject leaders, are aware of the outcomes of the tracking of pupils' progress and the setting of targets for further improvement. This means that learning is carefully and sensitively managed. A particular strength is the school's openness and willingness to discuss any issues or problems so that colleagues work together to overcome them. Staff are very willing to try new initiatives if they recognise that they will benefit pupils. For example, information and communication technology is being increasingly and effectively used to support learning in other subjects. This is increasing pupils' motivation and improving achievement.
20. The school has good assessment systems for monitoring and evaluating pupils' attainment and progress. These are continuously being refined and improved. The national tests from previous years are carefully analysed so that any weaknesses in pupils' understanding are identified and plans can be made to address them. Pupils' standards are then regularly reviewed so that targets for further improvement can be set. Pupils are aware of these targets and their work is marked very carefully and sensitively so that their progress towards these targets is very well supported.
21. Teaching and learning have improved well since the school's previous inspection because of the school's deep concern that all pupils reach their potential. The school is in a strong position to raise standards further.

The curriculum

The school's curriculum is of very good quality and there are very good opportunities for enrichment in activities out of class. The school's accommodation and learning resources meet the needs of the curriculum well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides its pupils with a balanced, interesting curriculum, which prepares them successfully for the next stage of their education.
- Literacy and numeracy are developed well through work in other subjects.
- The good availability of computers and software allows pupils to develop and use their information and communication technology skills effectively.

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, and for those who speak English as an additional language it is good.
- Provision for learning outside class is very good.

Commentary

22. The school's curriculum has been successfully reviewed and improved in recent years. Individual subject leaders are responsible for every subject in the curriculum. There are now well-developed schemes of work in place for all subjects based on the latest national guidelines, and this is a good improvement since the previous inspection. The planning for pupils in mixed age classes is particularly good, ensuring that pupils of both ages are well provided for and make progress systematically.
23. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is very well planned and enables children to achieve very well and so make very good progress. This very good start to learning is built on effectively in Years 1 to 6 because teachers plan interesting learning activities which engage pupils' interest very well. As a result, pupils are prepared very well for the next stage of their education.
24. The school is now implementing the national strategies for literacy and numeracy well. This results in pupils at different stages of learning being provided with a good range of learning experiences that develop their skills in these areas. These skills are now developed well in subjects such as geography, history, information and communication technology and science. The special arrangement for teaching literacy to pupils in Year 5 and the Year 4/5 class is particularly effective in matching work to prior learning and promoting good progress. Support staff provide extra assistance in literacy for identified pupils, which is effective in raising their standards and improving their commitment to learning.
25. A dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers and support staff work together very well. All of these adults are very well deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum and to respond to pupils' learning needs. However, teachers in Years 3 to 6, where there are large numbers of pupils in most classes, receive support in class too rarely, because of the small number of support staff. There are well-established arrangements for the continuing professional development of all staff which are guided by the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. These have improved curricular provision well. A good example of this is the improvement in the provision of information and communication technology since the school's previous inspection. This is now used effectively to support learning in other subjects. Staff organise very attractive displays of pupils' work throughout the building and these help to create a very pleasant, stimulating learning environment.
26. A central feature of the school's work is its determination to value all pupils and to include them in all aspects of its work. Girls and boys have the same access to all parts of the curriculum including games. No noticeable differences were observed in the standards achieved during the inspection. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well and are fully included in learning and all activities. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well so they work alongside their peers to take advantage of the curriculum offered. The targets set for them are clear and enable them to achieve well. These targets are reviewed and revised regularly to make sure that they are still appropriate to the pupils' current needs. The provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is good. When necessary, the curriculum is carefully adapted to their needs so that the targets in their individual education programmes are met. The school moves quickly to take effective action when there is a need.
27. A very good range of sporting activities outside school lessons is provided and pupils have the opportunity to participate in local school sporting events. A very good range of extra-curricular activities includes football, netball, rugby, dance, athletics, keep fit, recorder playing, drama, keyboard, and cross-country running. An example of the high standards reached was seen

when, during the inspection, teams of boys and girls received certificates at the celebration assembly for their excellent results in the local schools' cross country race.

28. The school makes very good use of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' learning. Health education, including sex education and guidance about the dangers of misusing drugs, is planned and taught well as part of the science and personal, social, and health provision. The school council provides an opportunity for pupils to air their views of the school and make suggestions about future developments. This is effective in developing an early understanding of citizenship.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of its pupils. Its procedures for ensuring that pupils work in a safe environment are very good. Very good levels of support and guidance enable pupils to develop into confident young citizens. The school involves all pupils very effectively by seeking and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's procedures for health, safety and child protection are very good and ensure that pupils work in a safe and secure environment.
- Very good procedures for induction help children to settle in well.
- Very good relationships ensure that all pupils receive appropriate advice and support.
- Pupils' views are valued as part of the school's self-evaluation systems.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language receive effective care.

Commentary

29. The school ensures that regular health and safety checks are carried out. The governing body is actively involved in supporting these arrangements. Thorough procedures, including risk assessments, are firmly in place to promote a safe learning environment. On a day-to-day basis, the caretaker and his team ensure that pupils work in a clean, safe learning environment. Child protection procedures are very well embedded and the school is diligent in monitoring the welfare of its pupils. Very good links with outside agencies, including the public health nurse and educational welfare officer, ensure that extra support is available when required.
30. The school works closely with parents to ensure that children enjoy a smooth transition into the Nursery class. All questionnaires returned by parents showed that they agree that procedures for induction are good. These procedures help pupils to make good progress in their learning. A wide range of information leaflets, as well as workshops on different aspects of the curriculum, help parents to support their children during the early years of their education.
31. Teachers and support staff provide very good role models for pupils and create a purposeful learning environment, where relationships are very good. The school's good assessment procedures are used effectively to guide pupils in their learning. Day-to-day marking and in-class discussions are particularly thorough and teach pupils effectively how they can improve their work further. This has a positive effect on pupils' achievement. The friendly support that pupils receive from staff and other pupils helps them to develop into confident, articulate young citizens.
32. Pupils' views are actively taken into account. The school council has been involved effectively in discussions about improving playground equipment. This included the council writing a full proposal to the parent teachers' association for funding. The school also carries out pupil questionnaires to evaluate their opinions of the school.

33. Pupils who speak English as an additional language learn in a stress-free atmosphere, because they are supported well and their achievement is monitored effectively. Those with special educational needs receive very good levels of care and support. Their needs are identified early and they are set clear and achievable targets. These are regularly reviewed so that further targets can be set. The school has good relationships with external agencies which provide effective support for pupils with particular needs.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents and other schools is very good overall and plays a pivotal role in achieving the school's aims. Links with the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' views of the school are very favourable.
- Very good information and meetings for parents help them to be part of the learning partnership.
- Parents' views are valued and acted upon as part of the school's self-evaluation.
- Links with other schools, especially the main destination secondary school, are very good, and good community links promote learning well.

Commentary

34. An analysis of the returns of parents' questionnaires indicates that **all** parents agree that:
- their children like school
 - their children make good progress
 - teaching is good
 - their children are expected to work hard
 - the school is led and managed very well
 - the school encourages pupils to become mature and independent
 - good induction arrangements are in place for new pupils.
35. This large number of wholly positive views reflects parents' confidence in the school, which they hold in very high regard. Inspection findings support all of these positive views. Parental support has a very positive effect on their children's attainment and progress. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved very effectively in their children's learning. Parents are very happy that the school treats rare instances of bullying seriously and deals with them effectively.
36. The quality of the documentation that the school provides for parents is very good. Pupils' annual reports include appropriately detailed information about their progress and areas for improvement. The well-written prospectus provides clear and helpful information. Newsletters are sent out regularly and provide useful information on events and activities. Booklets, including a booklet on 'helping your child with science', for example, and workshops are frequently provided to help parents to understand further the learning that their children are experiencing. The school is careful to ensure that parents whose first language may not be English are able to understand communications. Parents are made fully aware of the curriculum topics for each term through small booklets. These include useful suggestions on how they can help their children during the term. The parent-teacher association has raised substantial funds and regularly organises events to support improvements to the school's learning environment. For example, parents helped to raise funds for equipment in the Nursery and Reception classes.
37. The school carries out its own questionnaire to ascertain parents' views and, through constant self-evaluation, is always seeking ways to improve its partnership with parents further. For example, following the introduction of 'book bags' to promote literacy in the Foundation Stage,

parents' views were sought, so that the school could develop the facility further in line with parents' wishes.

38. Very good links, both pastoral and academic, exist with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer. These include projects begun in Year 6 and continued into Year 7, a range of workshops held during Easter and summer breaks and secondary school teachers working alongside primary school teachers. These links help to ensure that pupils settle into their next school without difficulty. Community links are good. Visits into and visitors from the local community extend pupils' learning experiences well. For example, a local supermarket has helped to improve the outdoor learning environment for children in the Foundation Stage.
39. The school is very aware of the important role that parents play as partners in their children's education. It has built up this partnership very effectively so that it is a strength of the school. It is in a good position to maintain these links and develop them further.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the leadership of other staff is very good. Governance is good with some clear strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's excellent leadership is a major strength of the school.
- The school is very effective in valuing all adults and creating effective teams. Its open culture enables all adults to participate in leading and managing the school.
- The school is very evaluative and has clear priorities for development based on the information gained from its analysis of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and are involved productively in strategic planning.
- Finances are managed effectively and the school plans to finance its developments effectively because it applies the principles of best value very well.

Commentary

40. The headteacher's excellent leadership is rooted in her deep conviction that all in the school, pupils and adults, matter and should be enabled to achieve their best. All are valued equally for what they can offer. The school has an excellent record in giving all its members equality of access to all that it offers. This valuing of all individuals in the school has built up an excellent ethos in which all in the school are working co-operatively and with very good commitment to achieve learning of high quality.
41. The headteacher is fully committed to continuing improvement. Overall, standards have improved since the school's previous inspection, although there was a dip in 2003 for reasons which are identified elsewhere in the report. Evidence from the inspection and the school's own analysis suggests that standards in the national tests are likely to improve again in 2004. In particular, the proportions of pupils likely to obtain the higher grades of level 3 at the end of Year 2 and level 5 at the end of Year 6 are likely to increase. This because the headteacher's excellent leadership of the curriculum has identified ways to improve learning, not least by developing the use of information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects. This is a significant improvement since the school's previous inspection. The headteacher's clear-sighted leadership enables all adults in the school to contribute very effectively to learning.
42. The headteacher rightly regards her teachers and support staff as her major resource. There is a very impressive unity of purpose among all adults in the school, which is firmly rooted in the school's Catholic base. All adults are fully supportive of the school's ethos and are able to contribute fully to it because the school has a tradition of openness so that all staff are aware of

the school's priorities for development and understand the reasons for them. Essentially, these are to enable all pupils to achieve the best that they can academically while developing into confident and caring young citizens aware of life's opportunities. To enable them to do this, teachers' professional development is very effectively managed to enable them to help the school to improve, while developing their own professional skills. Subject leaders are given very good opportunities to manage their subjects effectively. Overall, their leadership of the curriculum is very good. This has enabled information and communication technology and design and technology, for example, to improve markedly since they were identified as areas of concern when the school was inspected previously.

43. A key reason for subject leaders being able to manage their subjects very effectively is that the school is very evaluative. It assesses children's standards and learning skills when they enter the school and goes on to track their progress regularly as they move from one year group to the next. This provides subject leaders with detailed information about the progress that pupils are making in their subjects so that they can plan the next stages of learning. They also use it to identify any areas of weakness and plan to address them. For example, the subject leader for mathematics identified calculations as an area of weakness and wrote a new policy for calculations to support teachers in their planning to address this. Careful analysis of pupils' results in the national tests reinforces this flow of information well. Good information results in effective leadership and management in different parts of the school. For example, the Foundation Stage is very well led and managed because the Foundation Stage team are able to plan future learning on the basis of their very good assessment of children's previous progress.
44. Similarly, the leadership and management of special educational needs is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with all staff and supports these pupils very effectively. As a result, their achievement is good and they make good progress. A positive climate for learning means that all pupils have a very good chance of succeeding, regardless of gender, whether they are bright or talented or have specific barriers to learning, such as being at an early stage of learning English.
45. Governors are also an important part of the team. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development because a number have very good links with the school as a result of being linked with classes and subjects. Under the guidance of its experienced and thoughtful chair, governors are involved effectively in strategic planning and in the management of the school's finances. They contribute effectively to the school's improvement plan, which is carefully thought through after wide consultation. It shows a very good grasp of long term strategy, so that shorter term objectives contribute coherently to a longer term goal. Governors ensure that the school meets its legal obligations and that the principles of best value are applied very effectively.
46. The school's finances are managed very well in order to raise standards and give pupils the best education possible. Financial planning is managed carefully by the headteacher, her deputy, and the finance committee of the governing body. Day-to-day expenditure is controlled effectively by the school's office manager. The very recent audit of the school's accounts found that financial systems were operating well. The school has complied with the few recommendations which were made.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	807,904
Total expenditure	823,541
Expenditure per pupil	2,084

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	34,114
Balance carried forward to the next	18,477

47. The proportion of the budget carried forward has been used to maintain staffing. Given pupils' good achievement, their very good personal development, the very good curriculum provided for them, their very good care, good teaching and very good leadership and management, and the school's low costs per pupil, the school is giving very good value for money.
48. The major reason for this is the headteacher's clear-sighted and purposeful leadership. She is a constant and reassuring presence around the school. Pupils understand that she cares deeply for them but also has high expectations for their behaviour and effort. That they try hard to match these expectations is a tribute to her success. Parents appreciate this. At the parents' meeting, one parent remarked that 'the headteacher does a wonderful job'. This brought a murmur of agreement from the other parents present. Because the headteacher is very well supported by her deputy and all her colleagues, the school is in a strong position to improve further.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Children achieve very well in the Nursery and Reception classes. The majority of children enter the Nursery with levels of attainment which are well below average overall. There is very good provision and support for all children, including those who speak English as an additional language. This enables them to learn and work effectively alongside their classmates. Children become secure and confident with each other and with adults because very positive relationships are quickly established. Children with special educational needs are fully included in all Foundation Stage activities. This increases their confidence and self-esteem very well. Patient, calm and sensitive teaching ensures that these children develop well in all areas of their learning. All members of the Foundation Stage staff take every opportunity to encourage parents and carers to take a full part in their children's development. This increases the valuable sense of partnership between staff and parents.

The quality of teaching is very good across the Foundation Stage. Its very good features include assessment and teamwork. These ensure that children make very good progress in their learning. They respond very well to the interesting, varied and stimulating activities. All adults keep careful notes of individual achievement and use these to plan children's work. Teachers, the nursery nurse and support staff work very well together and this partnership ensures that each child is supported according to identified needs. There are very good arrangements for children entering the Nursery and Reception classes. The arrangements for their transfer to Year 1 are smooth and careful planning enables children to settle quickly into school routines.

The sensitive and supportive teaching and emphasis on personal, social and emotional development ensure that children quickly relate very well to each other and to adults. High expectations of behaviour result in children developing very positive attitudes to learning and an eagerness to do well.

Very effective leadership in the Foundation Stage has created a very good team of teachers and support staff who work very well together. As a result, children benefit from a very well-structured curriculum with very interesting and stimulating learning experiences. Their achievement is assessed very well so that future learning is planned to build systematically on what they know, understand and can do. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage has improved well since the school's previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well because the very skilful teaching promotes independence and develops social skills effectively.
- Provision in this area is very effective because many children enter the Nursery with low levels of social skills.
- Most children are on target to exceed the requirements of the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

Commentary

49. All adults who work in the Foundation Stage give children a very firm foundation for their future development in this area of learning. Teaching is very good and children achieve very well. Adults work hard to increase children's self-awareness, listening skills and patience in taking turns to respond to questions. Very careful planning ensures that all children are able to join in the full range of activities. They gain confidence and self-esteem and increase their ability to work well with each other and with adults. Children tackle their work with much enthusiasm in

the Nursery and are keen to 'have a go' at new experiences. For example, they responded very well to finding seaweed in the water tray and decided that it was 'shiny and slippery'.

50. Children continue with these very positive attitudes in the Reception classes because of the very good encouragement that the team provides. Careful organisation of group work throughout the Foundation Stage ensures that children learn to work and co-operate with a range of adults. This makes a positive contribution to the children's attitudes, so relationships in the Nursery and Reception classes are very good. Many children enter the Nursery with low levels of social skills. They quickly leave their parents and carers happily and settle quickly to the expected routines. Calm and patient teaching ensures that they trust adults and become confident and secure. The Reception class builds on this very good start and ensures that all children feel valued. There has been good improvement in this area of learning since the previous inspection. Most children are likely to exceed the early learning goals by the time they leave the Reception Year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All adults ensure that children have many experiences that increase their understanding and use of language.
- Very good teaching means that children achieve very well in developing and using their communication skills.

Commentary

51. Adults in the Nursery and Reception classes work very well together to ensure that children listen carefully. Teaching and learning are very good and children's achievement is very good. This is essential because many children enter the Nursery with low levels of listening and speaking skills. All adults share stories very effectively with children to interest them in books and to help them understand that print has meaning. Children enjoy listening to stories and, by the end of their time in the Nursery, choose to look at books independently. Most children achieve well in developing their speaking skills and talk happily with each other and with adults. Some still have difficulty in speaking clearly in sentences, in spite of positive encouragement from adults. The very good level of support throughout the Foundation Stage helps children who speak English as an additional language to begin to understand simple English. This enables them to join in well with their classmates. Members of staff work closely with all parents and carers, to increase their understanding of their children's needs.
52. The Reception classes build very effectively on the very good start children have in the Nursery. Careful planning ensures that children in the Reception classes are able to move on to work within the National Curriculum when they are ready. Teachers and support staff ensure that children increase their early writing skills. All children know that writing conveys meaning and higher attaining children are already beginning to write simple sentences. This is a result of careful teaching and children's high levels of interest and enthusiasm. Most children are on target to achieve the early learning goals by the time they leave the Reception classes. This is a significant improvement since the school was inspected previously and is the result of very effective teaching. Children achieve very well from a low base.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults give children many varied opportunities to investigate number and shape.
- Consistently very good teaching makes children's work exciting and stimulates them to learn.
- Very clear assessment procedures build on and extend children's previous knowledge.

Commentary

53. The Foundation Stage team provides a stimulating and exciting range of mathematical activities in the Nursery and Reception classes. These engage children's interest very effectively and motivate them to increase their skills in recognising and using numbers. Many children in the Nursery initially have difficulty in writing numbers, but very effective support for all children ensures that they increase their skills. By the time they leave the Reception classes, therefore, most are on target to achieve the early learning goals.
54. Teaching is consistently very good. All who work in the Nursery and Reception classes ensure that the support for children with special educational needs enables them to work alongside their classmates. This increases their confidence and self-esteem so that they achieve well. All children enjoy counting sessions and join in happily. The Reception class team work hard to increase children's ability to use suitable mathematical language. For example, one teacher dressed as a spider to reinforce the concept of eight. The children were very enthusiastic about this activity and quickly learned to recognise groups of eight objects. Children achieve very well. For example, higher attaining children understand the process of adding on, and count accurately to 20. All children support their learning effectively by using computers. This increases their mathematical understanding, as well as their computer skills.
55. Adults use assessment very effectively to give children work that meets their identified needs. This ensures that children consolidate their understanding and knowledge before moving on to new learning. There has been a marked improvement since the previous inspection. This has resulted from very good teaching which has ensured that children achieve very well and have very positive attitudes to learning.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All adults create many opportunities for children to increase their curiosity and awareness of the world around them.
- The consistently high quality of teaching gives children confidence to investigate and ask questions.

Commentary

56. Throughout the Foundation Stage, adults make sure that children increase their awareness of the world around them. They take them out into the immediate local area and make very effective use of the school grounds. For example, children enjoy using the pathway made of different surfaces and appreciate the different smells from the range of scented plants. All adults encourage children to ask questions and make suggestions. They give clear explanations of what children are expected to do and ensure that the work is interesting. This stimulates and motivates children to learn and achieve.
57. By the time they enter the Reception classes most children are confident in using scissors and other cutting tools. They experiment with materials, joining them together to make moving cardboard bears and caterpillars, for example. This increases their ability to make choices and

to decide which methods work best. Very careful teaching ensures that all children develop a keen interest in computers. They have secure skills in using the mouse and keyboard effectively to control movement on the screen. For example, by the time they enter the Reception classes, children create pictures and know how to 'click and drag' to change paint colours. These skills are further developed as children use the computer room to develop their techniques further. Although many children have limited experiences when they enter the Nursery, most are on target to achieve the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. This represents very good achievement. This very good improvement since the previous inspection is the result of consistently very good teaching and planning for children's progress.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching ensures that children achieve very well in developing their awareness of space and how to use it.
- Very effective use of indoor and outdoor provision increases children's ability to use and control their bodies.

Commentary

58. All members of staff work very hard to increase children's skills in using and controlling their bodies. This results in skilful sequences of movement and well-developed ability to use pencils, scissors and other tools. All children in the Foundation Stage have access to the school hall and to a well-equipped outside learning area. Members of staff use these areas very effectively to develop independent learning and the ability to work safely with large equipment. Children develop a very good awareness of the need for safe practices in physical activities and the recognition that others around them need space.
59. The very effective leader for the Foundation Stage has created a cohesive outside provision with shared use of the outdoor learning area. This gives the younger children opportunities to work with older ones and increases the older children's concept of care. All children throughout the Foundation Stage have plenty of chances to increase their skills in using tools such as pencils, scissors and brushes and in shaping and joining materials. Most children's skills are on target to exceed the expectations of the early learning goals by the time they leave the Reception classes. Progress has been very good since the previous inspection and children's achievement in this area of learning is very good.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All adults provide children with many varied and interesting activities, which develop their imagination.
- Children achieve very well in mixing and using colour to create pictures, patterns and texture.

Commentary

60. Consistent, very good quality teaching ensures that children begin to develop their imagination effectively and achieve very well from the time they enter the Nursery. The very good provision of imaginative areas, which interest and involve both boys and girls, increases thinking, speaking and co-operative skills.

61. All children learn to mix and use paint to create pictures and patterns and, in doing so, use their imagination well. For example, children in the Nursery used ice cubes to produce interesting repeating patterns. Adults in the Reception classes build very well on these early experiences. They help children to develop their skills in using media and materials very well. For example, children learn how to join legs to bodies using play dough, and experiment with a range of materials to create three-dimensional collages. They use their imagination very effectively to make mini-beasts such as spiders and clearly enjoy this stimulating work. All children practise their singing skills in a range of nursery rhymes and jingles in lessons and also have specific music sessions. All staff promote children's creative skills very well and most are likely to exceed the requirements of the early learning goals by the end of their Reception Year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in speaking and listening, reading and writing is good throughout the school.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make lessons interesting.
- Pupils have clear targets that show them how to improve.
- The standard of handwriting and presentation is inconsistent and the quality of spelling is below average, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good, and good for those who speak English as an additional language, so that they all achieve well.

Commentary

62. Standards seen in lessons and an analysis of completed work showed that attainment in Years 2 and 6 is broadly average. This represents good achievement. Standards are similar to those found at the previous inspection, but, in view of the very low starting point for many pupils, progress has improved from satisfactory to good. Systems for assessing pupils' skills in reading and writing are good and this information is used well to plan the next steps in their learning and to provide good guidance for pupils.
63. Standards in speaking and listening are average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils have achieved well in these two areas from very low starting points on entry to the Nursery. Teachers pay good attention to developing listening and oral skills, both in literacy lessons and when teaching other subjects. They explain new terminology very clearly and check that complex phrases are fully understood. Pupils listen very well. For example, in assemblies and at the end of lessons, when working groups report to the whole class, pupils concentrate well and respect each other's contributions.
64. There is a good emphasis in Years 1 and 2 on teaching pupils to blend and join letter sounds within words; this promotes good progress in reading. In shared reading sessions, teachers and other adults promote skills well, for example, by looking at a picture before reading the book and discussing the plot. They highlight the vocabulary and characters of a story before reading the text. This is an effective way of helping pupils to tackle new text, while improving their understanding of the story and creating interest in it. Library skills are taught very well throughout the school. Very good schemes of work are provided for each year group and most pupils are confident in using the school's libraries.
65. The development of writing skills has been a major focus for school improvement and has led to better standards of work. When writing their stories, Year 2 pupils are developing their

settings well and introducing some interesting characters. Capital letters and full stops are evident in most pupils' writing by the end of Year 2. Their writing is generally easy to read and higher attaining pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds very effectively when attempting harder words. However, spelling in the older age groups is often careless. Pupils do not consistently use their knowledge of spelling patterns and understanding of prefixes and suffixes when attempting longer words. They are inclined to spell words as they say them.

66. In Years 3 to 6, pupils learn about a wide range of writing techniques and know the features of different styles of writing. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote a biography of a famous author and a letter from an evacuee, which made effective links with their history project. In one lesson, they worked very hard in discussing poetry written in the style of a Japanese Haiku. Pupils compared two poems before enjoying and putting considerable effort into writing their own. This type of work is extending their reading skills as well as providing ideas for their own writing. Teachers are now providing more opportunities for consolidation of writing skills in other subjects in order to improve attainment. The school now has a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting, but has not had sufficient time to produce a whole-school style. Because of this, standards in handwriting remain inconsistent. For some pupils, handwriting is neat, legible and regular, while for others, it is badly formed and difficult to read.
67. Overall, standards of teaching are very good. In over half the lessons observed, the standard of teaching was very good, and, in one lesson, it was excellent. Teachers plan well and their good subject knowledge enables them to promote effective learning overall. The systems for assessment are good and are supported by careful marking of pupils' work. This ensures that pupils have clear targets that help them to raise their standards further. Teachers make very good use of praise and encouragement, which helps to boost pupils' self-esteem. The leadership and management of the subject by the new co-ordinator, assisted by the headteacher, are very good. Regular and perceptive mentoring of teaching and learning has led to improvements in the standard of teaching.
68. Teachers throughout the school choose interesting books and topics to study that engage the attention of both boys and girls. In the lessons seen, progress was good regardless of gender. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are given good support and achieve well. Pupils who have special educational needs are supported very well by teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator. However, there is in general too little support in the classroom, especially in Years 3 to 6. Homework is used satisfactorily to extend work done in the classroom and is usually completed conscientiously.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. Now that the standard of pupils' writing has improved, it is being used with increasing effectiveness in other subjects such as history and geography. The school has set very challenging targets for its present Year 6 pupils. Inspection findings indicate that it has a good chance of meeting these in the national tests in 2004. Two factors contribute most strongly to the school's success in developing its pupils' literacy skills. These are the effective teaching in classes across the school in all subjects and the very good leadership and management of learning by the subject co-ordinator and headteacher.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising well as a result of effective teaching.
- Teachers plan interesting learning activities which engage pupils' interest well.
- Systems for monitoring pupils' progress are good because the subject is led and managed well.

- Good opportunities are taken to develop numeracy skills in other subjects.

Commentary

70. Standards as measured in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 have been rising in recent years. In 2003, they fell back at the end of Year 2 but improved at the end of Year 6. The school's predictions and evidence from the inspection suggest that standards are likely to rise again in 2004, but are unlikely to reach the national average. However, they are likely to compare well with similar schools, and this represents good achievement in Years 1 to 6.
71. Standards are rising because the quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school, varying from very good to satisfactory. There is good coverage of the curriculum. Throughout the school, higher attaining pupils attain above average standards. Average and lower attaining pupils generally have a secure level of understanding, but tend to make careless errors which depress their standards. For example, in a very well taught lesson in Year 6, some made basic errors when using calculators. This meant that they could not get the correct answer, even though they knew the mathematics needed to answer the question.
72. Teachers plan interesting tasks which motivate pupils well so that they put in a good amount of effort and work with sustained interest and concentration. In a number of classes, for example, in Years 1 and 5, pupils were working at a level above that expected for their age because they were set challenging tasks and worked at them conscientiously. Teachers are careful to set different tasks for pupils at different stages of learning so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are able to achieve well. Pupils who are particularly gifted in mathematics have benefited from holiday workshops and a weekly maths club for pupils in Year 6. This attracts a good number who work at a range of interesting problems. However, pupils are less comfortable with mathematics problems that are expressed in words, and many are unsure of how to tackle them. They are not always quick to spot the obvious and easiest way of dealing with them.
73. The subject is led and managed well and the subject leader is continually seeking ways to raise standards. For example, a successful 'investigations week' in the autumn term attracted some 90 parents to support their children by discussing how mathematics is taught using the National Numeracy Strategy. Key elements in the successful management of the subject are the systems that have been created for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. These give the school a secure understanding of the progress that pupils are making. They are being continuously developed and refined. This careful tracking of progress is a significant reason for pupils' good progress and achievement. Other effective contributions made by the subject leader include a new policy for calculations, combined with class targets for calculations and problem solving. The organisation of good resources for learning has worked well and considerable investment in resources has enabled learning in mathematics to be supported by information and communication technology. There are good examples of teachers using interactive whiteboards effectively to illustrate what is being learned and to make teaching more interesting. These are good improvements since the school's previous inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

74. Numeracy is developed well in other subjects. Information and communication technology is used well to support learning in mathematics, good examples being observed during the inspection. Science and geography are used effectively to reinforce learning in data handling and representing information in graphical form. Design and technology plays its part in helping pupils to measure accurately.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The current focus on scientific enquiry and investigation is having a positive effect on standards and achievement.
- Pupils achieve well, due to consistently very good teaching and strong leadership and management.
- Standards in written work are depressed by the inaccuracy of some pupils' spelling.
- The rich and stimulating curriculum interests and motivates pupils to learn.
- There is very good use of information and communication technology to support learning in science.
- The systematic and thorough assessment systems meet individual needs well.

Commentary

75. There has been a significant improvement in teaching and learning in science since the previous inspection. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work because teaching throughout the school is consistently good, with almost half being very good, and the focus on scientific enquiry is having a positive effect on achievement. Strong, well informed leadership and management ensure that guidance for teachers is clear, that pupils build on their earlier learning, and that marking is used effectively to improve pupils' work. Systems for the assessment of pupils' progress and achievement are thorough and the subject leader monitors teaching, learning and standards regularly. The school makes effective use of its stimulating and exciting grounds and of the local area to offer pupils a varied, interesting curriculum.
76. An analysis of written work shows that pupils achieve standards close to those expected of this age group by Year 2. This is a significant improvement, since the previous inspection, when standards were below those usually expected. The focus on scientific investigation and enquiry ensures that pupils in Year 1 achieve above average standards in their work. All teachers plan work that builds carefully on pupils' previous learning. They make the work interesting and stimulating and, as a result, pupils want to learn. Many pupils enter the school with low levels of vocabulary and understanding, and this restricts their skills in written work.
77. By Year 6, standards in science are close to national expectations. These are similar to those recorded by the previous inspection but a significant improvement on the national test results in 2003. There has been an improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels. This is because of the increased focus on investigative work and teachers ensuring that pupils understand the meaning of technical language. There is not, however, enough emphasis on pupils spelling scientific words correctly. This restricts achievement and progress.
78. The effective subject leader ensures that all teachers place much emphasis on the investigation element of science. As a result, pupils benefit from a very good curriculum in science. This is making a very significant contribution to pupils' achievement, interest and motivation. Throughout the school, teachers ensure that pupils produce carefully labelled drawings and accurate diagrams. Their ability to write concise and clear summaries of their findings is restricted by their inaccurate spelling of scientific vocabulary. The tasks for pupils with special educational needs are planned to enable them to make progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. This, and the sensitive support from adults, ensures that they achieve well in science. Support for higher attaining pupils is good. All teachers take great care to ensure that these pupils' work increases their scientific knowledge and understanding systematically. Overall, the quality of teaching is good.
79. Pupils use information and communication technology well to support their learning in science. For example, pupils in Year 2 used computers confidently and accurately to record their findings about food. There are examples of the effective use of information and communication technology in other year groups.

80. Teachers make the work in science very interesting and exciting for all pupils. This makes sure that girls are as enthusiastic as boys and achieve equally well. The subject leader is very clear about what needs to be done to raise standards further. She has put a range of effective strategies in place already. These include an emphasis on the use of investigation and correct scientific language from Year 1. This emphasis is making a positive contribution to pupils' achievement. All teachers use assessment and marking effectively to improve pupils' work. They ensure that all work builds carefully on pupils' previous learning and gives pupils achievable targets to attain. This increases pupils' awareness of their own learning and increases their confidence well as they realise how they are improving.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as they progress through the school because of the very strong leadership of the subject and effective teaching.
- A very significant improvement in resources since the previous inspection is evident in a designated computer suite and greatly improved provision in classrooms.
- Teachers are confident in the subject and use their skills and knowledge effectively to ensure good progress and improved standards for all pupils.
- The well developed use of information and communication technology in other subject areas is increasing awareness of its usefulness as a learning tool.

Commentary

81. Very significant progress has been made since the previous inspection in the teaching of ICT. Standards are now average by Years 2 and 6. This is a good improvement on those recorded in previous inspection, when they were below average. Very well informed subject leadership and the development and use of the new computer suite have been major factors in this improvement.
82. Pupils are making good progress and achieving well in acquiring a suitably wide range of computer skills. For example, Year 1 pupils effectively and confidently control the mouse to put different coins into a purse to total a range of coins accurately. By the end of Year 2, pupils enter information into a database and successfully produce diagrams about mini-beasts by posing 'yes/no' questions. This increases their awareness of how computers can be used to support work in science. Work analysis shows that, in control activities, they confidently program the 'Roamer', a programmable floor toy, to give directions. By Year 3, pupils, including those with special educational needs, accurately insert pictures and text to produce information about the Ancient Greeks. These pupils achieve very well as a result of the stimulating and very well informed teaching. Older pupils have very good word processing skills, and use these to produce lively and eye-catching work in many other subjects. In one example, pupils had written high quality newspaper style reports about interviews with different members of staff. By Year 6, pupils are confidently using 'PowerPoint' to create their own presentations. In these lessons they have worked together co-operatively and independently to produce information for Year 5 pupils. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of the use of the Internet, and older pupils successfully download images to merge with their own writing. They have a good awareness of Internet safety needs.
83. Other issues causing concern at the last inspection have been addressed very well. Clear and thorough auditing and action planning by the recently appointed subject leader has aided these developments. Teachers now have a very good knowledge of the subject. Their confidence has increased because of high quality training and the very significantly improved resources. Support from the Education Action Zone team is very effective and support staff and parents are well trained. These factors have a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement. The

use of a national scheme for teaching ICT has had a positive impact, both on teaching and on pupils' learning. There is now a more systematic approach to the teaching of key skills, which ensures coverage of all areas of learning in ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

84. ICT is very well used to support learning in a number of curriculum areas. It features increasingly in teachers' planning, which is helping to improve subject knowledge and ICT competencies. In English, it is used very effectively in a wide range of story telling and report writing. Pupils enhance their mathematical skills when they use branching diagrams and spreadsheets. Data handling features well in science, where pupils use computers to collate and display their findings. Significantly improved resources enable pupils to carry out in-depth research in history and geography. As a result, pupils in Year 6, for example, write knowledgeably about the Jarrow march in their newspaper reports. There has been a significant improvement in the way in which ICT is used to support learning since the school was inspected previously.

HUMANITIES

Geography and history were inspected in detail and are reported below. Religious education will be inspected and reported on separately by the diocese.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very enthusiastic and enjoy geography so that they achieve well.
- There is good coverage of the curriculum.
- Teaching is good and builds up pupils' knowledge and skills systematically.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

85. From the lessons observed and an analysis of pupils' work, indications are that pupils achieve well throughout the school and reach average standards. This is a similar finding to that of the previous inspection.
86. Pupils in Year 2 are familiar with maps of the British Isles, Europe and the world. They identify many towns and cities as well as mountain ranges and rivers. They gain this knowledge partly through finding out where 'Barnaby Bear' goes on holiday, as well as by discussing their friends' holidays. Pupils write a holiday postcard to a friend, which is effective in developing their literacy skills. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 watched a video of 'Barnaby Bear' helping to rescue two children who had drifted out to sea in a rubber dinghy. The pupils were totally absorbed in this and were thrilled when the rescue was successful. They successfully contrast their local environment with an island off the coast of Scotland, identifying similarities and differences. Pupils are familiar with maps of the local area and understand how people use land. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' understanding of Ordnance Survey map symbols is well developed. Year 6 pupils' work on 'The Journey of a River' is carried out in depth, due to good opportunities for independent study and use of the Internet, videos and CD-ROMs for seeking information. They have linked this work very effectively with their study of the Brazilian rain forest.

87. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers make lessons very interesting and their attention to display in the classroom captures pupils' interest in the subject. They set work which offers a good level of challenge to pupils at different stages of learning, including those with special educational needs. As a result, all pupils achieve well and make good progress. Good opportunities for speaking and listening or for practising different kinds of writing develop pupils' literacy skills well. Their use of tables and graphs develops their numeracy skills effectively.
88. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The enthusiastic subject leader has made significant changes to the curriculum, providing teachers with a useful scheme of work based on the latest national guidance. This concentrates to a greater extent on development of geographical skills and has helped to improve standards. Portfolios of work for each age group have been prepared which help teachers to judge pupils' progress as they move through the school. Resources for learning are good and have been recently upgraded.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy studying the past and so achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- The subject is led and managed well.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills in history.

Commentary

89. The observation of lessons and an analysis of work in books and on display indicate that pupils achieve well throughout the school and reach average standards. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about a range of famous people, for example George Stevenson, Florence Nightingale and Guy Fawkes. They have a secure early understanding of how people's lives change as time passes. The work of pupils in the Year 3 classes was very impressive. For example, in previous lessons, pupils had used videos and posters to make a study of the Ancient Greek way of life. They were challenged to write a short speech to convince the class which was the most important thing the Greeks had left us. Both teachers in the lessons observed used the time very well to introduce an understanding of democracy, linking it to the way members of the school council were elected to represent all pupils in the school. This helped pupils to develop their listening and speaking skills and promoted an early understanding of citizenship.
90. Teaching is good. Teachers have a good rapport with their pupils and create a very good ethos for learning. Pupils work hard, enjoy lessons, and so achieve well.
91. The co-ordinator is very experienced. She provides good leadership in the subject, sharing her expertise and experience effectively with colleagues. She ensures that the curriculum is covered well. Resources are good and there is a good selection of books in the school's libraries to foster pupils' interest in the subject.
92. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in history. Regular speaking and listening activities develop pupils' oral competence well and writing for different purposes reinforces their writing skills.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Music was inspected in detail and is reported below. Art and design, design and technology and physical education were sampled and no judgement is made on the quality of teaching.

Art and design

93. It was not possible to see enough lessons during the inspection to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching. However, evidence from the one lesson seen, pupils' sketchbooks and work around the school indicated that standards are average, which is similar to those found at the previous inspection. There has been a very significant improvement in the use of non-European art as a stimulus for pupils' work. This has produced some exciting pieces of work showing, for example, African-style sunsets, Aboriginal patterns and Native American 'dream catchers'. Work in sketchbooks shows how teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to increase their observational skills and to develop their techniques systematically. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have produced careful pencil sketches of faces, showing an increasing awareness of the position of the features. Pupils in Year 3 have discussed and reflected on their own and each other's achievements as they made clay models. This has made a positive contribution to their spiritual development and is an improvement since the previous inspection. By Year 6, pupils are confident in their use of a range of media, including information and communication technology, and have experimented with different styles and techniques. This work has increased their understanding of how to use perspective and shadow to create effect and mood well. Work on Islamic patterns and Japanese art has substantially increased pupils' understanding of non-western cultures. The school encourages pupils' individual talents and further enriches their experiences through visits and art exhibitions. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their work and take much pride in their achievements. The very wide range of experiences available in art and design is evidence of effective subject leadership and management.

Design and technology

94. There is no judgement on the quality of teaching because it was not possible to see any lessons during the course of the inspection. It is, however, evident from work around the school, in a collection of pupils' work, and from pupils' design books, that standards exceed expectations by Years 2 and 6. This is a very significant improvement since the previous inspection and is clear evidence of very good subject leadership. Pupils throughout the school have a very clear understanding of how to plan, design, make and evaluate products. They give careful thought to suggestions for improvement and take great care over the finish of their products. This is evident for example, in Year 1's well-finished cat-flaps and Year 6's beautifully finished and decorated slippers. It is clear that teachers build on pupils' previous learning effectively as they move through the school. For example, pupils' attention to detail and their ability to use a variety of stitches improve considerably from the puppets that they make in Year 2 to the purses that they make in Year 4. All teachers make very good links with other subjects. This is particularly noticeable in the work on pneumatics in Year 3 and musical instruments in Year 5. The school enriches its very effective curriculum in this subject, and increases pupils' enthusiasm, by taking part in a range of local competitions. For example, one pupil won a prize for the school in a competition to design a monument for the gateway to Segedunum. Another pupil had a design for an environmentally friendly car of the future printed in a calendar. These achievements increase pupils' self-esteem and pride in their school. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

Physical education

95. It was only possible to observe two lessons in physical education. In one lesson, information and communication technology was used very effectively to support learning so that achievement was very good and standards were above average. In the other lesson, teaching and learning were good and standards were in line with expectations. Standards in swimming are below average. Pupils have good opportunities for competitive games and for some external coaching. A wide range of experiences in physical activities includes a day visit for Year 5 and a residential visit for Year 6. Pupils benefit from good links with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer through the school sports co-ordinator programme. Physical education has a high profile in the school, which hosts a number of competitions for

local schools. This is possible because the school has good facilities and is well resourced. There is clear evidence of good leadership and management of the subject.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in many classes because teachers are competent and confident.
- Good resources support learning well.
- Good opportunities outside class improve pupils' learning in music effectively.

Commentary

96. The subject leader has worked effectively to raise standards in music and the standards found when the school was inspected previously have been maintained. Teaching and learning are good overall and pupils achieve well. This is evidence of effective leadership. Teaching and learning benefit because a number of staff are able to play instruments and have a good level of subject expertise. In their lessons, their subject competence and confidence result in good teaching and learning and good achievement. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils understood the meaning of pulse and were able to distinguish between fast and slow speeds and clapped the pulse to fast and slow pieces, maintaining the time well. There was a good awareness of specialist musical vocabulary. For example, one girl was able to explain what a lullaby was. Pupils sang to guitar accompaniment reasonably accurately and had reasonable success in singing 'Hickory, Dickory Dock' as a two-part round. In this lesson, standards were above average and achievement was good.
97. Similarly, in a Year 4/5 class, all pupils played a recorder reasonably accurately and knew the notes of the treble clef. Most were able to 'compose' their own piece with four beats to the bar, using quavers, crotchets, minims and semi-breves. They are aware of rests, and are able to clap a fairly complex rhythm, including crotchets and quavers and observing rests. Standards in this lesson were above average and achievement was very good. This was the result of very good teaching rooted in very good subject expertise. Whole school singing in assemblies is good and is very effectively supported by guitar accompaniment by a teacher and a member of the support staff. All adults in the assembly were very good role models, encouraging pupils to sing enthusiastically and join in with the actions. Pupils' standards are average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the time that they leave the school.
98. These above average standards are achieved as a result of good teaching. This is partly due to the effective use of good resources. There is a good supply of tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments throughout the school and keyboards provide an additional resource in some rooms. There is regular use information and communication technology to support learning in music and this is becoming increasingly effective. This is a good improvement since the school's previous inspection.
99. The pupils' musical experiences are enhanced well by experiences outside class. There are opportunities to learn instruments, partly through the Children's University, which the school has access to as a result of its membership of the Education Action Zone. Regular productions give pupils throughout the school experience of performance and they also have the chance to hear live music. Recent visitors to the school have included a string quartet and an African drumming workshop.
100. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development and also helps with their social development. The school is in a good position to raise standards further.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership ensures that personal, social and health and citizenship education is central to the school's ethos.
- Pupils are given good early experiences of citizenship.
- Pupils learn about the importance of healthy life styles, especially in science and physical education lessons.
- All staff support pupils' personal development very well through their own conduct and very good relationships.

Commentary

101. This area of the curriculum is led very effectively by the headteacher and subject leader and has improved markedly since the school was inspected previously. The school makes pupils' personal development a high priority because it is through pupils gaining confidence and a positive self-image that they will achieve their potential academically. Very good opportunities are taken in assemblies, at times of 'meditation', to enable pupils to reflect on a range of issues. These experiences promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, and so their personal development, very effectively. Similarly, in whole class discussions, pupils discuss a range of issues sensitively with a clear respect for the views of others. This is reflected throughout the school in pupils' willingness to share equipment and work co-operatively together. These very good attitudes result from very good teaching in this area of learning.
102. This very good personal development is reinforced by good early experiences of citizenship. Pupils take responsibility in various ways which are suitable for their age. An important aspect of this is the school's work for different charities. Parents appreciate the opportunities that their children have to understand that there are others less fortunate than themselves. Another important aspect of citizenship is the work of the school council. Pupils elected to the council have achieved improvements in the school, for example, in playground equipment. They have learned that improvements have to be paid for and that privileges have to be matched by responsible behaviour. The residential visit for older pupils is another means of extending their social skills, presenting them with new challenges, and increasing their confidence further. Pupils' mature and co-operative behaviour is appreciated throughout the school community, for example, by the breakfast club organiser, the caretaker, lunchtime supervisors, and support staff.
103. There is a very good emphasis on healthy living and healthy eating habits, with water and fruit being provided for pupils during the school day. These attitudes are reinforced in science lessons and in physical education lessons where, for example, the importance of warming up before physical exercise is emphasised. Pupils also understand the effect of exercise on the body, for example, the reason why the heart beats faster.
104. All adults support pupils' personal development very well by setting good examples in their own conduct. For example, teachers participate enthusiastically in singing and signing in assemblies, so that all pupils are encouraged to do so. All adults in the school are caring and sensitive in their dealings with pupils, but within the context of having high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes. These high expectations are rooted firmly in the school's Catholic base. As a result, pupils' personal development is secure. It is very effective since pupils understand clearly that they are valued because they meet the high standards that are set for them. Highly effective support enables them to do this. Very good relationships throughout the school have a very positive effect on pupils' personal development and on their achievement.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	1
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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