

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **OUR LADY'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Aspull, Wigan

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106490

Headteacher: Mrs S E Darbyshire

Lead inspector: Mr J C Midgley

Dates of inspection: 7 – 9 June 2004

Inspection number: 257127

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:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	155
School address:	Holly Road Aspull Wigan
Postcode:	WN2 1RU
Telephone number:	01942 832299
Fax number:	01942 776598
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father K Foulkes

Date of previous inspection: 22 June 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Our Lady's RC Primary School is situated in a semi-rural area of Wigan and it has large grounds. As a denominational school, it has a wide catchment area and children are admitted from Wigan and Bolton. The socio-economic background of pupils is mixed and attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. There are 155 pupils on roll at this one form entry school, with a standard admission number of 30. The transfer of pupils to and from the school is below average and although the school is currently undersubscribed, the roll is rising. Most pupils are white with a very small number of pupils coming from different ethnic groups. There are no pupils whose first language is not English, which is low. Eleven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, a proportion which is in line with the national average. The school has identified 13 per cent of pupils who need further support, the majority with moderate learning difficulties – a figure which is below the national average. Two pupils have a statement of special educational need, which is in line with the national average. At the time of the inspection, there were two teachers on temporary contracts in Years 1 and 4.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1064	Mr J C Midgley	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Music
9798	Mrs V Ashworth	Lay inspector	
14975	Mrs C Halsall	Team inspector	English Geography History Physical education
1516	Mr M W Warman	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science Art and design Design and technology Information and communication technology

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school's effectiveness is good** and it provides good value for money. Standards are very high in Year 6 and pupils achieve well. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The leadership and management of the headteacher and the governing body are effective.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- The good provision for children in reception ensures they make a good start to their education.
- There is some underachievement in lower Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, particularly of the most able pupils in the core subjects.
- The monitoring of teaching quality is insufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency through the school.
- It is a caring school, relationships are very good and pupils behave very well.
- There are very good links with parents and the community.

The improvement since the last inspection in June 1998 has been good overall. Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen. In response to the areas for development identified at the last inspection, standards of reading and spelling have improved, data is used effectively to set individual targets, and the quality of information to parents is much better. However, the match of work to pupils' abilities is still unsatisfactory in lower Key Stage 2. The external fabric of the school has been improved.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	A	A*	A
mathematics	B	B	A*	A
science	A	C	A	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.*

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

**Achievement is good** and overall standards are very high. Children in reception start school with broadly average skills. They make good progress towards achieving the goals they are expected to reach and many children exceed them. Pupils also achieve well in Year 2, where current standards are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also achieve well in upper Key stage 2, where current standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Standards are above average in ICT and in art and design. Results in national tests confirm that pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is in the top five per cent across the country for English and mathematics. However, there is some underachievement in Years 1, 3 and 4, particularly of the most able pupils.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good.** Pupils have good attitudes to school and their behaviour is very good. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good** overall but there are inconsistencies. Teaching and learning are very good in reception, and good or very good in Year 2 and upper Key Stage 2, particularly in English, mathematics and science. This leads to the very high standards achieved at the end of each key stage. However, teaching and learning are only satisfactory in Years 1, 3 and 4, and a lack of pace and challenge means that the most able pupils underachieve in the core subjects.

The quality of the curriculum is good. The good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits enrich pupils' learning. Accommodation is now good overall and the quality and quantity of learning resources are good. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and there is an effective programme of personal, social and health education, including citizenship. Pupils are very well prepared for secondary school.

Pupils receive very good care, guidance and support throughout the school. The partnership with parents, the community and other schools is very strong.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are good** overall. The recently appointed headteacher has made a very good start and her leadership and management are effective. The leadership and management provided by the subject co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science are also good – co-ordination of other subjects is satisfactory. The governing body is hard working, supportive and challenging. It has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and it provides effective leadership and management. Statutory responsibilities are met.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents have a high regard for the school and support it very well. They are very positive about the way it is led and managed, and how their children are cared for. They have no significant concerns about the school.

Pupils like school and are happy. They know which adult to go to if they are worried at school. They believe that teachers listen to their ideas, trust them to do things on their own and help them to make their work better.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1, 3 and 4.
- Ensure that the monitoring of teaching quality is systematic and rigorous.
- Make tighter and more measurable links to raising standards and quality in the school improvement plan.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall standards are very high. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. Standards and progress are best in Years 2, 5 and 6. Standards in the core subjects are well above average.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- In reception, almost all children achieve the expected standards and many exceed them.
- There is some underachievement in Years 1, 3 and 4, particularly of the most able pupils.
- Standards are above average in ICT and in art and design.

#### Commentary

1. Children in reception start school with broadly average skills. They make good progress towards achieving the goals they are expected to reach and many children exceed them. The very good teaching they receive means that children achieve particularly well in personal, social and emotional development, in communication, language and literacy, and in mathematical development.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.5 (18.2)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.6 (16.2)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	18.6 (18.6)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 22 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. At the end of Year 2, the results of the national tests show that standards in reading were well above the national average and well above the average of similar schools. Standards in writing were above the national average and similar schools. In mathematics, standards were very high – in the top five per cent across the country. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level (Level 3) was well above average for reading and mathematics, and above for writing. The trend is broadly in line with the national trend and both boys and girls achieve well.

3. In the current Year 2, achievement is good and standards are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because of the consistently good teaching they receive, their good attitudes to learning, and their very good behaviour and relationships with one another and with the class teacher. Standards are above average in ICT and in art and design. They are average in geography and history. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on standards in design and technology, music and physical education. Religious education was not inspected. There is some underachievement in Year 1, particularly of more able pupils, because of a lack of pace and challenge in lessons. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good in Key Stage 1.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.3 (29.3)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	30.7 (27.9)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	31.0 (29.1)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 18 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. At the end of Year 6, the results of the national tests show that standards in English and mathematics were very high – in the top five per cent across the country. These standards were well above those of similar schools. Standards in science were well above the national average and similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level (Level 5) was very high for all three core subjects. The trend is above the national trend and both boys and girls achieve well.
5. In the current Year 6, achievement is good and standards are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. This is because of the consistently good teaching they receive in upper Key Stage 2, their good attitudes to learning, and their very good behaviour and relationships with one another and with the class teachers. Standards are above average in ICT and in art and design. They are average in geography and history. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on standards in design and technology, music and physical education. Religious education was not inspected. There is some underachievement in Years 3 and 4, particularly of more able pupils, because of a lack of pace and challenge in lessons. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good in Key Stage 2.
6. Pupils in the present Year 6 are on line to achieve the school's demanding targets for 2004.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils have good attitudes to learning; their behaviour is very good and the school makes very good provision for personal development. The school's overall provision for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance and punctuality are also very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has a very calm, pleasant atmosphere where high standards of behaviour are expected and achieved.
- Relationships throughout the school are strong.
- Pupils develop very good social skills and their understanding of right and wrong underpins the work of the school.
- Pupils' spiritual awareness is very good.
- Attendance and punctuality are very good.

### **Commentary**

7. Attitudes to learning are good overall. Pupils are keen to learn and their behaviour is very good because they enjoy their work. There is a shared sense of pride and purpose that creates a very positive atmosphere in school. Staff are consistent in their implementation of the school's behaviour policy and they have high expectations. Pupils are open and friendly with visitors and on their own initiative offer assistance, either by showing them around or explaining

something about their work. They are considerate towards each other and play co-operatively together. The vast majority of pupils display an enthusiasm for school and are keen to take advantage of the many opportunities it offers, particularly through extra-curricular activities, in which considerable numbers of pupils take part.

8. Relationships and personal development are very good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and are given opportunities to exercise wider responsibility, for example, by serving on the school council and the Eco committee and by being given classroom responsibilities. Pupils are keen to play a full part in the life of the school. Older pupils are given a number of opportunities to consider the needs of younger children such as reading to them and by acting as play leaders.
9. School assemblies play a major role in nurturing the spiritual, moral and social development of pupils. Pupils celebrate the achievements of themselves and others through assembly and develop an understanding of their own and other people's cultures through a range of subjects. There is scope for pupils' understanding of the diversity of the world they live in to be developed further.
10. The good provision for personal, social and health education and circle time enables pupils to explore feelings, relationships and responsibilities.

## Attendance

Attendance is very good and well above the national average. Parents are supportive of the school's approach to maintaining this high standard.

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.7	School data	0.1
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

## Exclusions

There were no exclusions in the previous academic year.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good. The quality of the curriculum is good. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils receive very good care, guidance and support throughout school. The partnership with parents, the community and other schools is very strong.

## Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good but there are inconsistencies. Teaching and learning are very good in reception, and good or very good in Year 2 and upper Key Stage 2. This leads to the very high standards achieved in the core subjects at the end of each key stage. However, teaching and learning are only satisfactory in Years 1, 3 and 4, and the most able pupils underachieve.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good understanding of the core subjects of the National Curriculum, which helps to ensure pupils' high standards by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Well planned lessons and activities engage pupils' interest very effectively.
- Teachers are very good at ensuring pupils behave very well.
- Lack of pace and challenge in Years 1, 3 and 4 lead to some underachievement.
- Teachers promote equality of opportunity well and all lessons are inclusive.
- Teachers make good use of assessment to plan for future learning and marking helps pupils to improve their work.

**Commentary**

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 27 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	7	9	11	0	0	0

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

11. In the reception class, the teacher and teaching assistant work together well as a team. They provide a secure learning environment where children make significant gains in their levels of confidence and in the development of their social skills. Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and this is reflected in the planning, which is very effective. They have high expectations of children in all the six areas of learning and the provision is good. Teaching is particularly strong in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development. In these areas, effective reference is made to the pupils' own practical experiences so that they are fully engaged in the learning. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on teaching and learning in creative development, physical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world.
12. In Years 1 to 6, teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and understanding of English, mathematics, science and ICT. They teach the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy competently, using consistent approaches, which ensure that pupils build up their skills effectively and achieve high standards by the end of Years 2 and 6. Teachers consistently reinforce good behaviour so pupils behave very well in class and concentrate on their work. There is a harmonious working atmosphere in lessons, which has a positive effect on pupils' learning. Lessons are well organised and there is usually a good range of worthwhile activities that interest and engage the pupils. This is particularly noticeable in the core subjects in Years 2, 5 and 6, where the teaching is best. Too much teaching in Years 1, 3 and 4 is only satisfactory and more able pupils underachieve. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on teaching and learning in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education.
13. Teachers' planning is thorough. It is appropriately based on national guidance, such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In all lessons, teachers put the learning objectives on the board and refer to these at the beginning of lessons to ensure that pupils are clear about the overall purpose of the session. This is a strong feature of the daily English and mathematics lessons. In general, work set is well matched to the levels of knowledge and understanding of most pupils. However, insufficient attention is paid to the needs of the most able pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4, who underachieve in the core

subjects. Here lessons lack the pace and challenge necessary for good progress to be made. Staff work together well as a team, so that all adults, including teaching assistants, are clear about the purposes of the activities and their roles and responsibilities within them. This ensures that individuals and small groups are given the extra help they need with specific tasks, including pupils with special educational needs. Teachers carefully monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs towards their well-focused learning targets. New work is planned to build effectively on what they already know and can do. Teachers promote equality of opportunity well and all lessons are inclusive.

14. In the core subjects in Years 2, 5 and 6, teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and lessons are well timed. Pupils of all abilities benefit from these brisk lessons and they make clear gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning resources are used well. In English, classrooms and the library are well equipped with fiction, non-fiction, poetry and plays. Pupils use a wide range of media in art and design to build up good skills as they move through the school. Good use is made of artefacts and field trips to extend the learning in geography and history.
15. Overall, the quality of assessment is good. It is used effectively to plan for future learning, particularly in the reception class and in Years 2, 5 and 6. Marking is careful and thorough and it helps pupils to improve their work. In the core subjects, teachers' questioning is generally rigorous and plenary sessions are used well to check what learning has taken place. Where teaching is good or very good, effective reviews take place at the end of lessons so that pupils can assess for themselves what they do and do not understand, as when pupils in a Year 2 mathematics lesson had to explain what they have learned, in correct mathematical terms. Good use of technical language is a feature of the best lessons seen, as is the strong focus on asking pupils to explain their thinking.
16. Individual lessons in ICT are good and the programme provides a good range of opportunities over time for pupils to both develop and consolidate their skills. Lessons are well planned and all aspects of the National Curriculum are covered effectively. ICT is increasingly used in other curriculum subjects as an integral part of the teaching and learning process to raise standards.
17. Different types of homework, such as reading and learning tables, are given and these suitably reinforce the pupils' learning. The school's homework policy and procedures meet the expectation set out in the national guidelines.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum provided by the school is good. It is inclusive and is enriched by many opportunities and activities. The accommodation is now good overall and resources are good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The breadth of the curriculum is good for pupils of all abilities.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

## **Commentary**

18. The range of learning opportunities is good and meets statutory requirements. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Schemes of work ensure that the teaching of skills and knowledge in all subjects is planned clearly at an appropriate level for pupils of all abilities. Provision for pupils with special needs is good and they are well supported.
19. The school provides pupils with a good range of interesting and stimulating activities including visitors, such as an artist in residence and local clergy, which add depth to the curriculum. Parents make an active contribution by supporting the work in classrooms and on school outings. The curriculum prepares pupils well for their move to secondary school, a fact remarked on by parents at the meeting.
20. Pupils receive good support for their personal development. There is an effective drugs awareness programme and a planned series of lessons on sex and relationships education. These and other activities successfully promote pupils' personal, social and health education. Provision for extra-curricular learning is good. A good number of clubs are organised, including French, drama, science, gardening and a good range of sporting activities. Pupils' participation in the arts and sport is good. A good number of pupils have the opportunity to learn an instrument and sports teams from the school have achieved good success.
21. There is an appropriate match of teachers and other staff to the needs of the curriculum. The level of accommodation is now good overall. The school uses the outside well, whenever possible, and provides swimming lessons for pupils weekly. The school grounds and the immediate area beyond provide a valuable resource for play and learning.
22. Resources for learning are generally good. The range and variety of books available in the school library are good. Resources for ICT are good and have played their part in improving standards, as has the increasing use made of ICT by teachers and pupils across the curriculum.
23. Visits out of the school are used well to stimulate learning, as exemplified by the work undertaken after visits to local churches, Haigh Hall and to Hinning House in Cumbria. Displays are interesting, supportive and up to date; they help to create a bright and stimulating learning environment.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school takes very good care of its pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- This is a very caring school.
- The pupils are very effectively involved in the life of the school and hold it in high regard.
- There is good provision for support, advice and guidance.
- Child protection training needs to be updated.

### **Commentary**

24. Routines for dealing with accidents and for ensuring safety in the building and on outside visits are very well established. Safety checks are carried out regularly and all staff are

trained in emergency first aid. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and all members of staff are fully briefed on their responsibilities. The school is aware that it should now take advantage of updated training. The school is anxious to promote a healthy lifestyle, where water and fruit are encouraged during the school day. An awareness of the necessity of preserving the local environment is developed through the school's Eco activities.

25. Teachers know the pupils very well and effectively promote the pupils' personal development. The monitoring is a continuous process throughout the school day, and formal recording is reserved for areas of concern. Pupils soon form very trusting relationships with adults in the school, which greatly assist the teaching and learning process.
26. Induction arrangements work very well and are enhanced by the 'Inspire' programme which is enjoyed by both parents and children. Children settle very quickly into new routines and the teachers get to know them very well. Very good care is taken of those who enter school whatever their age or stage of learning. The school council, pupil questionnaires and circle time, provide the pupils with a very effective voice in the day-to-day running of the school. As a result, the pupils have a very well developed sense of pride in and ownership of the school and they feel greatly involved in its life and work.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school's links with parents, other schools and the community are very good. This shows a very good improvement overall since the last inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have a very high regard for the school.
- The school has developed very good links with the local community.
- There are very good links with the secondary school.
- Pupils' annual reports still require further development.

## **Commentary**

27. The parents who answered the parents' questionnaire together with those who attended the pre-inspection meeting have very positive views of the school. They like the open-door policy which works very well and are appreciative of how well their children are cared for. A few parents commented on the inconsistencies in teaching across the school, particularly in lower juniors where some lack of progress becomes noticeable. In Year 4 there had been three teachers in one year which some parents felt had an adverse effect on teaching and learning. However, parents feel that they are listened to and that overall their children achieve very well. They appreciate the hard work of the staff, their involvement in extra-curricular activities and, in particular, the recent introduction of a drama club and Christmas production.
28. The quality of information to parents was a key issue at the last inspection. All documents now meet statutory requirements and the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents provide very good, helpful information. Pupils' annual reports are satisfactory. The school is aware that more information on progress, targets and areas for development would be helpful to parents and a new format has been designed for the end of this academic year. There are regular newsletters, parents' evenings are very well attended and curriculum objectives are given to parents each half term. These together with the approachability of all staff, which parents take every advantage of, provide effective communication.
29. Parents' views are sought formally in reception and in Year 6, which the school finds very helpful in determining strategies. The less formal feedback from parents is continuous and taken seriously. Parents are very involved in their children's learning both at home and at school. Many volunteer to assist in school and on trips. Reading records are completed and there are joint visits to the local library with parents. Because of the very close links with parents, concerns and complaints are all dealt with quickly and efficiently.
30. There are very good links with St. Joseph's RC High School, which continue to grow. There are regular visits from staff to ease the transition stage and there are particular links with sport, science and modern foreign languages. The school enjoys very rewarding links with local sports and athletics clubs, which show an interest in the school. Links with the local community are very good. The school is very much at the hub of village life and involved in many activities, such as improving the environment with planting schemes and opening its doors to the highly successful Summer Fayre organised by Our Lady's Parent-Teacher Association. The school is used in the evenings for monthly bingo and the historical society. The school has a very close relationship with the church and the parish priest chairs the governing body. A community mass is held regularly in the school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The governance of the school is also good. Statutory responsibilities are met.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has provided effective direction focused on raising standards.
- The headteacher is developing teachers' leadership capability.
- Analysis of performance data is thorough and is used effectively to improve attainment.

- The monitoring of teaching quality is insufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency through the school.
- The governing body makes an effective contribution to the leadership of the school.
- The school improvement plan lacks measurable links to raising standards and quality.

## Commentary

31. The headteacher provides good leadership and effective direction with a clear focus on raising standards. She has worked hard to establish policies and planning, as well as systems and structures, which provide a firm foundation from which the school can continue to make progress. She has taken much effective action since her recent appointment, giving a strong lead in raising standards of teaching and learning, attainment and achievement. She has been instrumental in creating a supportive environment in which staff and pupils feel valued.
32. The headteacher, together with senior staff, has analysed the available performance data thoroughly, including National Curriculum test results at the end of key stages and teacher assessments. These analyses include pupils' performance at the higher levels, the performance of boys and girls and the value added between key stages, which helps the school to sharpen the target setting process, monitor progress in each class and diagnose the weaknesses. The headteacher regularly monitors teachers' planning and scrutinises pupils' work. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has been carried out but this process lacks sufficient rigour to ensure consistency through the school. There are good systems for performance management across the school and an appropriate whole-school pay policy. Performance management is effectively supported by a programme of staff training and the mentoring arrangements that are in place for staff new to the school.
33. The headteacher is supporting staff to develop their leadership capability. Subject co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science have a good overview of the quality of the standards in their subject. They are conscientious in their approach, monitoring planning regularly and scrutinising pupils' work. From a detailed analysis of assessment data, they set challenging targets for individual pupils and monitor progress regularly. Co-ordination of other subjects is satisfactory but more needs to be done on developing effective procedures for improving teaching and learning.
34. School improvement planning is thorough and provides clear educational direction for the work of the school. Resources are linked to priorities, with actions, timescales and success criteria specified, although the success criteria focus mainly on task completion. Thus the improvement plan lacks measurable links to raising standards and quality. Staff and governors are consulted about the review of the previous year's plan and they are included in the improvement planning process. However, they are insufficiently involved to ensure that the plan is a useful management tool and that all aspects of school life are considered.
35. The school's aims and values are clearly reflected in its day-to-day work. The headteacher, staff and governors work closely together to promote the Catholic ethos of the school, which particularly enhances pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils are very well cared for and all feel safe and secure in their surroundings. Very good relationships have been established between pupils, and between pupils and adults. The school's finance and administrative officer provides an efficient and welcoming point of contact for visitors and parents, and the school's financial procedures are managed well. ICT is used effectively in managing the school's finances.
36. The school is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all its pupils. This leads to inclusive lessons and effective provision for pupils with special needs.

37. The governing body makes an effective contribution to the leadership of the school and to its successes. It works hard, supports the school well and provides an appropriate degree of challenge. It is committed to ensuring the highest quality of education for all pupils and it works closely with the headteacher to achieve this objective. The governing body has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors know \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ understand their role clearly and they successfully meet their statutory responsibilities. The proceedings of the governing body are conducted efficiently and committees are well organised. Many of the governors visit the school regularly and are involved in the life of the school.
38. Financial planning is good with a planned programme of spending clearly linked to the priorities in the school improvement plan. The school's budget is monitored closely by governors and the school uses specific grants well for their purpose. The school ensures that money is spent wisely by researching and making decisions about goods and services that represent best value. Governors also compare, contrast and challenge how effective the school is in helping the pupils to achieve the best possible standards before making major spending decisions. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	421,463
Total expenditure	431,087
Expenditure per pupil	2,781

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	24,832
Balance carried forward to the next	15,208

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

All of the children in the Foundation Stage enter school in the September of the year in which they become five. Prior to entry, children and their parents participate in a very good induction programme called 'Inspire'. Children are taught in a reception class of 24. The class teacher is supported by an effective teaching assistant. There is a wide range of attainment on entry but taken overall children's attainment is broadly average.

The provision is very well led and managed and there has been good improvement since the last inspection, when the children were judged to make sound progress. In particular, the provision for outdoor play has been improved.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good** and forms a firm foundation for children's development in all other areas of learning.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children achieve well because of the high expectations set by staff.
- Children's behaviour is very good.
- Very good relationships have been established and children work with confidence and independence.

#### **Commentary**

39. Children make good progress and achieve well. Almost all children achieve the expected standards and many exceed them. Teaching is very good with staff providing good role models and setting high expectations of children. The children respond very well to the warm welcome from the staff and show a good sense of belonging to Our Lady's. Routines are very well organised, children settle very quickly and work with confidence and independence. Behaviour management is consistent and fair, and children behave very well. Children learn to take turns and share equipment, and they develop good social skills. They work purposefully and concentrate on their activities very well. The school provides good opportunities for children to develop an understanding that people have different needs, views and beliefs that should be respected.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and children achieve well.
- Many children will exceed the expected standards by the end of the year.
- Children enjoy learning to read and write.

## Commentary

40. Teaching is very good. The teacher quickly engages the attention of all children, challenges them to think and sessions proceed at a brisk pace. A wide range of activities is planned, which support children's development effectively.
41. Many children speak confidently in different situations and show good listening skills. They are learning the early skills of reading very well. There is a systematic approach with a high level of individual attention given to the development of children's understanding. Staff read stories in an interesting way and encourage children to develop a love of books. The teacher finds ways to make story time exciting – for example, when a letter arrives for Goldilocks outlining the complaints of the Three Bears. Children are able to answer questions about stories they have read and can retell their favourite ones. A good emphasis is given to children learning about the ways in which books are organised and they learn to handle books with care. Staff encourage children effectively to learn the sounds and shapes of letters of the alphabet and children apply these in their reading and writing. Writing is developed very well. Children learn to write for different purposes. More able children can write simple sentences by the end of the year and can talk knowledgeably about their writing.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Children develop number skills well.
- Good emphasis is placed on children learning mathematical vocabulary.

## Commentary

42. Children achieve well and many are on course to exceed the expected standards. Staff encourage children to count and use numbers in a wide variety of situations, almost all work reliably up to ten and many beyond that. Children enjoy mathematics and benefit very well from the interesting practical activities that encourage problem solving. They learn to record their thinking in a range of different ways. Children develop a good grasp of the concepts of shape, space and measures. They talk with good understanding about the properties of different shapes, they recognise and recreate simple patterns and make good comparisons using size and quantity. Staff insist on children using the correct mathematical language and children develop a wide ranging mathematical vocabulary. Effective planning results in very good teaching and learning.
43. In the short time available for the inspection it was not possible to observe three areas of learning – **knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development**. Teachers' planning and a consideration of children's work shows that a suitable programme is in place for each area.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

## ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high at the end of both key stages.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good in most classes and pupils achieve well.
- The most able pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 could achieve more.
- Pupils' work is well marked with constructive advice on how to improve further.
- Pupils read and write in a wide range of genres.

### Commentary

44. At the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, standards in reading and writing are high. Standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above the national average and higher than average numbers of pupils achieve Level 3. Standards in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 are above the national average. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils achieve well above the national average in both reading and writing. The number of pupils achieving Level 5 is well above the national average. Boys as well as girls achieve well above the national average at both key stages.
45. The school has made significant improvement since the last inspection. The consistent implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has ensured a coherent approach to the teaching of reading and writing in both key stages. The policy has been rewritten and provides good direction for the subject. Pupils are now reading and writing in a wide range of genres and are confident in their use of different forms of text. Subject knowledge of teachers is good overall. Teachers are now using information from data analysis to set appropriate targets for pupils. Pupils are aware of the targets set but are not yet fully involved in their own evaluation of their progress. Pupils with special needs make good progress and support programmes are used appropriately for pupils to enable them to catch up with their peers. Most teachers are skilled at differentiating their questions to pupils during whole-class teaching to ensure that pupils can join in the lesson at their own level of ability.
46. The strategy for teaching spelling has improved since the last inspection and there is now an effective whole-school approach. Teachers display high frequency words and spelling conventions in their classrooms, which pupils use to good effect in their writing. The teaching of grammatical structures is also good with teachers using a high level of technical vocabulary with confidence. This enables pupils to talk knowledgeably about language and to use this knowledge to improve their writing.
47. The school recognises the importance of developing pupils' speaking and listening skills as a foundation for learning in this and other subjects. Standards in speaking and listening are good and pupils are able to talk confidently to each other and to their teachers. Pupils have a good vocabulary and are encouraged to use a dictionary and a thesaurus to extend this further. In circle time, discussion is a key feature aimed at encouraging pupils to speak well, listen to others and maintain the focus of a discussion. Teachers now need to build upon this good practice by integrating these skills more widely in English lessons. Drama activities are underused and should be developed further to promote greater understanding of text and the intentions of the authors. The school is intending to promote the importance of speaking and listening through the 'Inspire' programme for parents of reception children to support the development of oracy as a basis for learning.
48. Pupils have good attitudes to reading and staff have instilled in them a love of books. Classrooms and the library are well equipped with fiction, non-fiction, poetry and plays. Teachers share these with pupils, providing good models for reading with expression and

fluency. The print-rich environment in classrooms highlights for pupils the importance of reading and writing for a real audience and purpose. Pupils in Year 2 read fluently, with expression and understanding. They are able to tackle unknown words using a variety of strategies such as reading on, spelling out and breaking words into syllables. Pupils in Year 6 read very well and are able to discuss their favourite books and authors. They can also discuss the nature of characters and how authors build mood and create tension. They can read with sustained concentration and understand the need to persevere with a book even if it does not seem exciting in the beginning. From Year 1, pupils know how to use books to find information and use indexes and contents pages accurately. The home-school reading diary provides a useful link with parents but could be used more to record and monitor progress made in developing skills. Further development in reading ICT texts would assist pupils when researching materials from the Internet.

49. Pupils write in a wide range of styles at both key stages and standards are good. Strategies for teaching writing are largely successful but more could be done in guided writing to ensure that higher attaining pupils are challenged to make improvements in their writing. The use of the 'Author's chair' ensures that pupils are given opportunities to celebrate their achievements with their class mates. Work in pupils' books is of a good standard and is well marked with constructive comments which help pupils to understand how to improve their work. Pupils are given opportunities for writing long pieces and this results in some very good work in story and non-fiction. Handwriting, although legible and mostly neat, could be improved by a common approach to joined writing from the early years. ICT is used well to support the writing process and many pupils are able to compose directly onto the computer.
50. The quality of teaching and learning is good in most classes and pupils achieve well. Teaching is best in Years 2, 5 and 6, ensuring good progress and high standards. In these classes, there is effective planning, interesting activities, very good relationships and high standards of behaviour. Teaching is only satisfactory in Years 3 and 4, where lack of pace and challenge limits achievement, particularly of the most able pupils. Scrutiny of work also reveals similar underachievement in Year 1.
51. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is aware of strengths across the school and of areas for whole-school improvement. She is now given time to monitor the subject and uses this time to observe teaching, monitor teachers' planning and examine pupils' work. The outcomes of the observation exercise have yet to be used to make an impact on the quality of teaching throughout the school.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

52. Pupils use their good language and literacy skills to enhance their learning in other subjects and appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to practise reading, writing, speaking and listening. Some work has been done to link the teaching of writing in the literacy lesson to writing in other subjects but this needs to be developed further by ensuring that teachers make the links explicit to pupils.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are very high and pupils achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is good overall; it is consistently good or better in Years 2, 5 and 6.
- There is underachievement in Years 1, 3 and 4 among the most able pupils.
- Relationships and behaviour are both very good.
- The subject is well led and managed.

### **Commentary**

53. At the end of Year 2 and Year 6 standards are very high. Pupils of all abilities achieve well overall but there is some underachievement in Years 1, 3 and 4, particularly of the most able pupils. By the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils working at Level 3 is well above the national average. Similarly, by the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils working at Level 5 is very high. Boys and girls make good progress overall in both key stages.
54. Evidence from books, discussion with pupils and observations of lessons shows that pupils are developing a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics as they move through the school. Number work is a strong feature. In Year 2, pupils can partition a number into tens and units, add and subtract numbers using two and three digits, and use the two, three, four, five and ten multiplication tables. In Year 6, pupils can multiply and divide whole numbers and decimals by ten, 100 and 1000, they understand the equivalence of decimals and fractions, and they can use ratio and proportion to solve problems.
55. Progress and standards are best in Years 2, 5 and 6, where the quality of teaching and learning is consistently high. Lessons are very well planned and the learning objectives are shared effectively with the pupils and revisited in the plenary session at the end of the lesson. Challenging work is set, which interests and engages the pupils. Learning resources are thoughtfully used to support the learning; for example, in a Year 6 lesson on the equivalence of fractions and decimals, the interactive whiteboard and computers clearly enhanced pupils' knowledge and understanding. In these year groups, time is well used – sessions begin promptly, not a minute is wasted and lessons are delivered with energy; for example, in a Year 2 lesson on angle properties, pupils worked productively throughout. In addition, homework is set regularly to reinforce and extend what is learned in school. Relationships are very good and there are high standards of behaviour.
56. In Years 1, 3 and 4, although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, there are lower expectations. This results in lessons lacking pace and challenge. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on multiplication of ten by single digit number, the more able pupils finished their work quickly as it was too easy for them.
57. The subject is well led and managed. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly with regard to progress and standards. There is a subject improvement plan with appropriate priorities. The long and medium term plans follow the National Numeracy Strategy and provide effective direction for the subject. Pupils' books are carefully marked and they indicate how the work could be improved. There is analysis of performance data, monitoring of teachers' planning and scrutiny of pupils' work. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is ineffective as it is not sufficiently used to identify and remedy weaknesses.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

58. Pupils confidently use mathematics in other subjects where appropriate. They are developing an appreciation of the practical uses of these skills. Good progress has been made in using ICT to assist learning in mathematics.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are high and pupils achieve well.
- The most able pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 could achieve more.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- There is a good emphasis on investigational science.
- The subject is well led and managed.

### **Commentary**

59. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils of different abilities achieve well in all aspects of the subject, although there is some underachievement by the most able pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4. Pupils achieve a good standard of investigative work with increasing development of scientific skills of observation, prediction, testing, recording and analysing as they move through the school. As they progress, they learn to communicate their findings by drawings, diagrams, graphs, short and finally longer well thought out reports. All their recorded work shows a developing understanding of science. Older pupils identify patterns in data and give reasons for their conclusions. Pupils' developing knowledge of scientific vocabulary is evident; for example, when Year 6 pupils predict what might happen when solids are mixed with a liquid. Their understanding of scientific processes was also demonstrated well in their work on why changes in materials were reversible or irreversible.
60. The quality of teaching in science is good overall although it ranges from satisfactory to very good. There is evidence of very good teaching in the oldest class which results in the high standards achieved. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure. They know their pupils well, and they capture and sustain their interest effectively. They mostly plan interesting activities with effective use of resources so pupils are enthusiastic about science. Planning is carefully thought out so that questioning and tasks are often matched to pupils' different abilities. This ensures that pupils have the opportunity to make progress at their own rate, building up their knowledge and understanding in science. Learning is also effective because most teachers use questioning well to establish how much pupils have remembered from earlier lessons and to ensure they understand the scientific vocabulary they will be using. In the most successful lessons the teacher set a particularly high expectation of the pupils in terms of work and behaviour and the pupils responded to this very well. In Years 1, 3 and 4 there are low expectations and a lack of challenge which leads to pupils underachieving.
61. The subject is managed effectively and overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Although the quality of teaching and learning is monitored, there is insufficient rigour to ensure that there is consistently good teaching throughout the school. The teachers plan well and plans provide good working documents. Assessment is effective and the information is generally used to guide future work. The outdoor environment and good resources in school are used well to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in science.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have risen since the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve well.
- The ICT resources are used well.

### **Commentary**

62. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above those expected nationally. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
63. By Year 2, pupils learn the basic operations of switching the computers on and off, loading and saving work, and controlling the computer by means of the keyboard and the mouse. The school has developed a good range of appropriate software so that pupils enjoy using computers. Pupils use the computer for a wide range of purposes, for example, to write, draw pictures and analyse data. Pupils in Year 2 are beginning to use simple spreadsheets to record data. They have also had opportunities to use the Roamer programmable toy, giving it a series of commands in order to produce pre-planned movements. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to improve their skills. By Year 6, they use ICT competently in a range of ways – to present information, such as when using a multimedia package; to exchange information and ideas with others, including use of the Internet; and to note patterns and trends in data. They learn to control events, such as modelling control appliances in their ‘bedrooms’, and also to interpret data that has been collected through sensing devices. Throughout the school, pupils talk knowledgeably about the use of ICT in everyday life.
64. The quality of teaching is good. Staff have improved their understanding since the time of the last inspection and most are now confident in the subject. Pupils learn well because they are given clear instructions and plenty of opportunities to experiment, practise and learn from their mistakes. They also learn quickly because tasks are interesting and teachers’ own positive approaches and interesting ideas catch their attention. For example, pupils in Year 6 were working on spreadsheets and data collection sheets in preparation for their topic on sweet production. Teaching assistants support the quality of teaching well. For example, when pupils in Year 1 were recording data from a simple survey of their class mates, the teaching assistant worked effectively with individuals and groups. There is an appropriate system of assessment in the subject and older pupils are clear about the progress they are making.
65. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed with significant improvements over time. Resources are much improved and used to good effect.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

66. ICT skills are taught with relevant links to other subjects. There is increasing use of ICT in other areas of the curriculum. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 used their ICT skills very effectively to further their understanding in English and in mathematics.

### **HUMANITIES**

67. Religious education was not inspected as it was inspected separately at a different time. Only one lesson was seen in geography and none in history. Thus there was insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching and learning or the overall quality of provision in either subject. Discussions with the subject co-ordinators

and examination of pupils' work enabled judgements to be made on standards, achievement and the effectiveness of subject leadership.

68. Achievement in **geography** is satisfactory and standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 meet expectations. Planning is effective and systematic overall and takes account of the mixed age classes in Key Stage 2. Assessment is now in place but is mainly concerned with coverage and knowledge, with insufficient attention given to developments in the progression of skills over time. Pupils in Key Stage 1 can make maps of familiar routes and study their local area. Teachers make the work interesting and relevant by drawing on pupils' experience when making a study of other countries. For example, in Year 2, the pupils' experience of observing the flags being displayed in preparation for Euro 2004 was linked to a study of the flags of other European countries. Teachers in Key Stage 2 also draw on pupils' life experiences, when studying the uses of water, contrasting localities and a range of countries around the world. Pupils are given the opportunity to practise their geographical skills during the highly successful field visit to the Lake District. The curriculum is well supported by resources and artefacts.
69. Achievement in **history** is satisfactory and standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 meet expectations. Planning is effective and systematic overall, covering local, British and world history. It takes account of the mixed age classes in Key Stage 2. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and make effective use of well made resources. However, there is little evidence to show that pupils undertake research activities to develop their understanding of how data can be interpreted or to suggest that pupils understand the ethnic and cultural diversity of societies studied. Assessment is now in place but is mainly concerned with knowledge and insufficient attention is given to developments in the progression of historical skills of enquiry and interpretation of information sources. The curriculum is enriched through the use of field trips and well chosen museum artefacts which provide pupils with some first hand experiences.
70. Leadership and management of geography and history are satisfactory, with support offered to teachers on resources and planning. The co-ordinator is now being given time to monitor and evaluate the subjects. This process is in the early stages and is not yet carried out with sufficient rigour have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

71. Only a few lessons were seen in these subjects. It was possible to observe only one lesson in art and design, no lessons in design and technology, two lessons in music and one lesson in physical education. No secure judgements on the quality of teaching and learning, achievement or standards were possible, except for standards in art and design.
72. An examination of the range of work on display in **art and design** indicates that the good standards seen at the last inspection have been maintained. Throughout the school, pupils have a good range of experiences and opportunities to develop their imagination and techniques. From the work seen it is evident that pupils build up good skills, using a variety of media, as they move through the school. The subject is currently being led and managed satisfactorily by the headteacher on a temporary basis. There is a good scheme of work that takes account of national guidance.
73. An examination of pupils' work and teachers' planning, and discussion with pupils, indicate that a suitable programme in **design and technology** is undertaken. There is good emphasis given to the development of pupils' understanding of the design, make and evaluate process. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. Effective use is made of national and local guidance to help ensure that the programme is both interesting and is taught systematically.
74. Standards were in line with national expectations in the two **music** lessons seen. Teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory. Appropriate resources were planned in advance so the lessons could begin promptly. Planning was sound, and relationships and behaviour were good. There were performing, listening and appraising elements in each lesson. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed.
75. The curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop their **physical education** skills in games, gymnastics, dance, athletics and swimming. Pupils in Key Stage 2 participate in outdoor adventure activities. The school benefits from two playgrounds and a large playing field which are used well. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. A good range of extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum. Dance, judo and basketball sessions are well attended and good use is made of professional coaches for football, tennis and athletics. School teams compete in netball and football, with other schools in the cluster. Good Inks are being developed with the local secondary school which has specialist Sports College status.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

76. Insufficient opportunities were available to judge the quality of teaching and standards in this area of learning. One **citizenship** lesson was seen in Year 6 and one circle time was seen in Year 1. Scrutiny of the co-ordinator's file, teachers' planning and pupils' work shows that there is good provision in this area. Pupils' personal qualities are well developed by the overall school organisation and by the thoughtfully planned **personal, social and health education** programme. Circle time is a strong feature which enables pupils to feel confident when talking about their emotions and feelings in a well structured environment.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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