

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. DOMINIC'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hackney, London

LEA area: Hackney

Unique reference number: 133669

Headteacher: Marie Hogg

Lead inspector: David Whatson

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th May 2004

Inspection number: 257633

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:	434
School address:	Ballance Road Hackney London
Postcode:	E9 5SR
Telephone number:	020 8985 0995
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr John Welsh
Date of previous inspection:	No previous report

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St. Dominic's Roman Catholic Primary School is much bigger than most primary schools. It is situated in Hackney, an inner-city area of East London. Part of the school building that accommodates pupils in Years 3 to 6 dates back to the 1870s. The school draws its pupils from the immediate area, which is a mix of local authority and owner-occupied housing. There are 409 pupils on roll, with a further 50 who attend the nursery on a full-time or part-time basis. Overall there is a broad balance between the numbers of boys and girls, although there are some variations in specific year groups. The economic circumstances of many families are below average; the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The intake is ethnically and linguistically diverse. There are 13 different ethnic groups represented at the school. The two largest ethnic groups at the school are those of a Black African background (42 per cent) or those of a Black Caribbean heritage (15 per cent). Nearly 63 per cent of pupils speak a language other than English at home; the main languages spoken at home are French, Twi and Yoruba. Thirty-two pupils are at an early stage of English acquisition; the majority of these (88 per cent) are in the nursery and reception classes. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average. Many pupils have learning difficulties. There are four pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need. Attainment on entry to the nursery class is well below average, particularly in language and personal development. The rate at which pupils start or leave the school at times other than at the start of the school year is slightly higher than is normal. In recent years the school has faced some major challenges. After a three-year period of uncertainty the junior school and infant school that shared the same site were amalgamated in September 2002. Since then there has been disruption, especially in Years 3 to 6, caused by staffing difficulties and extensive refurbishment of the building. There are seven unqualified staff at the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23494	David Watson	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage curriculum Information and communication technology Physical education
9092	Ron Elam	Lay inspector	
31525	Sue O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Mathematics English as an additional language Special educational needs
32505	Michelle Coles	Team inspector	Science Personal, social and health education, including citizenship History Geography
21372	Kenneth Hobday	Team Inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Music

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Due to its recent amalgamation **St. Dominic's Roman Catholic Primary School** has experienced a difficult few years. However, the amalgamation has been successful and the school provides a **satisfactory** standard of education, although there are weaknesses. The headteacher has worked hard and at times successfully to address the many issues that face the creation of one school from two separate units. As a result, pupils' achievement is satisfactory but inconsistent. Pupils have reasonable attitudes to work and good standards of behaviour. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses¹ are:

- Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 2.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- More able pupils do not always do as well as they could at the end of Year 6.
- Cramped accommodation inhibits both teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6.
- Standards in information and communication technology are below those expected, and pupils underachieve.
- The Foundation Stage² provides a good start to a child's education.
- Good personal development promotes good behaviour, good relationships and a racially harmonious school.
- The management of teachers' performance is not yet wholly effective.
- The school's strategic planning lacks precision.
- Attendance is very good.

As this is a new school there is no previous report against which to make a judgement about overall improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement across the school is not consistent because the rate of pupils' learning varies. Therefore, overall achievement is **satisfactory**. By the time they start Year 1, many children in the reception class will attain close to the expected goals for their age in most areas of learning and they achieve well, sometimes very well. In Years 1 to 2, pupils' learning is effective and achievement good. In the national tests in 2003 taken at the end of Year 2, results in reading and writing were above the national average and in line in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, they were well above. Teacher-assessed science results were above the national average, and well above compared with similar schools. Inspection evidence indicates that standards currently in Year 2 are lower than those achieved last year; in all subjects standards are close to those expected and many pupils achieve well. The difference is due to variations between the pupils in the two year groups. As this is a new school there is no trend in pupil performance. Those pupils who sat the national tests in Year 6 in 2003 made poor progress in relation to their prior attainment. This was because these pupils bore the brunt of the disruption caused by the amalgamation, staffing difficulties and major building work.

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

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

¹ The strengths and weaknesses are listed in order of significance.

² The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to: communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development, but also include: knowledge and understanding of the world; and physical and creative development.

Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals

During Years 3 to 6 pupils do not achieve as well as they could. However, on occasions, in particular lessons or in particular year groups, such as Year 6, they do make good progress and their overall achievement is satisfactory. In English, mathematics, and science, standards seen in Year 6 during the inspection were close to being in line with those expected. These improved results and better progress are because pupils make significant gains in Year 6 because of good teaching and also because during the year they faced less disruption.

Overall, pupils with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily. They achieve well from the nursery to Year 2 because of good teaching and provision. This is also true of pupils learning English as an additional language. In the rest of the school the provision for these two groups of pupils is satisfactory and they make expected gains in their learning. During the inspection no noticeable difference between the achievement of boys and girls or that of pupils from different ethnic minorities was noted. However, in the 2003 national tests for pupils in Year 6, girls did less well than they did nationally and pupils of Black African heritage did better than those from a Black Caribbean background. As this is a new school there is no trend in pupil performance.

Standards in information and communication technology are below those expected in Years 2 and 6 and, as pupils do not make sufficient progress, they underachieve. By the end of both Years 2 and 6, pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning in history, geography, art and design and by the end of Year 2 in physical education, and achieve the expected standard for their age. In the specific area of dance, pupils in Year 6 achieve well and standards are above those expected. Judgements were not made in other subjects because of lack of evidence or because they were not seen being taught during the inspection. Religious education was not inspected during this inspection, as this is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, is **good**. Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory and their behaviour is good. Attendance is very good. Punctuality is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**.

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**. Both good teaching and unsatisfactory teaching was observed in nearly every year group, except in the Foundation Stage where most of the teaching was good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in English or mathematics. In the good lessons teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subjects or areas of learning. Because of this, lessons are planned well and build on pupils' previous learning. Therefore pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language, make good progress. Although some unsatisfactory teaching occurred in Years 1 and 2, nearly all teaching was of a good quality and therefore pupils make good gains in their learning. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is greater in Years 3 to 6; this is a weakness. Because of this the teaching in these year groups is unsatisfactory overall, although, as with Years 1 and 2, learning is better because nearly all of the rest of the teaching is good rather than satisfactory. A particular weakness in much of the teaching is the planning. This does not provide enough focus or structure to provide an interesting and well paced lesson. Pupils with learning difficulties or those learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress in these years. Assessment is satisfactory; it is good in nursery and reception. But it is only in the Foundation Stage that teachers use the information well to adapt their planning so that teaching is most effective.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is of a good quality and that of the rest of the school is sound and meets the needs of most of its pupils. Opportunities for enrichment through visits and clubs are satisfactory. Although the school attempts to make the best use of its accommodation and resources, much of the accommodation in particular, namely the old junior building that houses Years 3 to 6, is unsatisfactory and hinders the teaching and learning of some subjects, especially

practical subjects.

Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory and help pupils to learn well. Pupils' involvement in the school's work is good. Pupils have satisfactory access to support, guidance and monitoring for their academic development and for their personal development the access is good.

The school fosters good links with parents. Links with the community and other schools are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is satisfactory. The headteacher has many good qualities, such as her vision for the school, her commitment to all pupils and the role model that she provides. Through the school's own evaluation, she has identified many of the challenges that face the school, but there is a lack of detailed planning that reflects the ambitions and priorities for this new school that is slowing the speed of improvement.

Management of the school is satisfactory. Although training and supervision have supported key staff in being part of the process of creating a new school and a new team, there are specific weaknesses in the management of teaching and the curriculum. Governance is satisfactory and the governing body fulfils its statutory duties.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents like their school and are pleased with what the school provides and the good relationships between home and school. Pupils also like their school. They state that they learn new things in lessons and believe that there is always an adult to go to if they are worried.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise the achievement of the most able pupils by the end of Year 6;
- improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently satisfactory or better throughout the school;
- improve the quality of teachers' short term planning, especially in Years 3 to 6;
- improve the accommodation for pupils in Years 3 to 6;
- raise standards in ICT across the school;
- ensure that the management of improvement in teachers' performance is more effective;
- ensure that planning for future development, both short and long-term, is systematic and focuses on the school's priorities.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Overall, pupils' achievement at the school is satisfactory. Current standards at the end of Year 6 are close to the expected level; this is a significant improvement upon the 2003 national test results.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well from the nursery to the end of Year 2.
- Achievement across the school is not consistent because of weaknesses in teaching.
- The most able pupils do not achieve as well as they could.
- Standards in ICT across the school are below those expected.
- Standards in dance at the end of Year 6 are above those expected.

Commentary

The Foundation Stage

1. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is well below that expected, particularly in their language and personal development. During the Foundation Stage they achieve well and attainment on entry to Year 1 in most areas of learning is likely to be close to the expected goals, except in language development where it is below.

Area of learning	Achievement	Possibility of meeting the expected goal for their age.
Personal development	Very good	Most are likely to meet it
Language development	Good	Most are likely not to meet it
Mathematical development	Good	Most are likely to be close to meeting it
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Good	Most are likely to be close to meeting it
Physical development	Good	Most are likely to be close to meeting it
Creative development	Good	Most are likely to be close to meeting it

Standards and achievement at the end of Year 2

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	16.4 (N/A)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	15.5 (N/A)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	16.7 (N/A)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 20 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. At the end of Year 2, results in reading and writing in the 2003 national tests were above the national average and well above when compared with those of similar schools. In mathematics they were in line with the national average but also well above those of similar schools. Teacher-assessed science results were also above the national average and well above those of similar schools. In relation to their prior attainment and capabilities, all pupils, including the most able pupils, achieved well.

3. Based on this one year group the difference between boys' and girls' attainment in reading and writing is far less than that found nationally. At Level 2³ and above boys do better than girls, although girls do better than boys at the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and science. However, boys do better in mathematics at this level. In terms of ethnicity the two largest ethnic groups at the school, those of a Black African or Black Caribbean heritage, achieve broadly the same at Level 2 and above. However, at the higher Level 3 there is a difference. More pupils of a Black African heritage achieve Level 3 in reading and writing, but in mathematics and science more pupils of a Black Caribbean heritage gain the higher Level 3.
4. Inspection evidence does not indicate any significant difference between the attainment or achievement of pupils of different gender or ethnic background. Standards seen during the inspection in reading, writing, mathematics and science were all slightly lower than those achieved in the 2003 national tests. The difference between the two year groups is attributed to the difference in ability between them, although pupils in the current Year 2 continue to achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and capabilities.

Standards and achievement by the end of Year 6

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.0 (N/A)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	24.7 (N/A)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	26.8 (N/A)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

5. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were below the national average in English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools, they were below in English, mathematics and science; the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5⁴ was well below. In relation to their prior attainment, pupils made poor progress. This year group experienced a difficult education in Years 3 to 6. During this period, numerous teachers taught them. This was exacerbated in Year 6 by a sudden change of teacher brought about by staff illness and by an academic year considerably disrupted by building work (the school had a new roof and all new windows installed during the year). This year group also experienced a higher than average rate of mobility, with numerous more able pupils leaving the school and less able pupils taking their place. In relation to their prior attainment and capabilities, pupils under achieved, particularly the more able.
6. As this is a new school there are no results from previous years for comparison. However, the school's analysis of last year's results does show considerable differences in attainment between boys and girls and between those of different ethnic heritage. Girls' achievement was far lower than that of boys at the school and that of girls in the rest of the country. This was also a contributory factor to the school's low results last year. The school attributes their underachievement to a group of girls who had poor attitudes to school and learning. In terms of ethnicity those of an African heritage did much better than those of a Caribbean heritage in English, mathematics and science.

³ **LEVELS Key Stage 1:** The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils are expected to reach Level 2 by the end of Year 2, when pupils are aged seven. If a pupil is attaining Level 3 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a child of his or her age.

⁴ **LEVELS Key Stage 2**

The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils are expected to reach Level 4 by the end of Year 6, when pupils are aged 11. If a pupil is attaining Level 5 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a child of his or her age.

7. Both school predictions and inspection evidence indicate that standards in Year 6 are better than those of last year. Standards in English, mathematics and science are close to those expected. Most pupils have achieved satisfactorily in relation to their capabilities and prior attainment. This is due to a better attitude among the pupils and a settled year, as they experienced no change of staffing and no building work. In recognition of the low results of last year, the school also channelled additional staffing into the year group to support pupils' achievement. However, high attaining pupils continue to underachieve because of a lack of challenge. Inspection evidence indicates no significant difference between boys and girls or those of different ethnic heritage.

Standards and achievement of those with learning difficulties

8. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Although many of these children are unlikely to achieve the expected goals by the time they start Year 1, by the end of Year 2 the standards that they achieve are close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6 pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Progress is slower in Years 4 and 5 but good in Year 6. By the end of Year 6 standards are generally below average in English, mathematics and science, although a small number achieve close to the national average.

Standards and achievement of those learning English as an additional language

9. The majority of children who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language are in Foundation Stage classes and they make good progress. The focus in these years on the development of the literacy and numeracy skills of all children is of particular benefit for these pupils. They continue to achieve well in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 there is a significant number of pupils for whom English is an additional language who have reached a satisfactory level of overall competence. Most achieve as well as their peers in the core subjects but do not reach the higher levels of fluency in speaking.

Other subjects of the curriculum

Subject	By the end of Year 2		By the end of Year 6	
	Achievement	Attainment	Achievement	Attainment
ICT	Unsatisfactory	Below the expected level	Unsatisfactory	Below the expected level
History	Satisfactory	As expected	Satisfactory	As expected
Geography	Satisfactory	As expected	Satisfactory	As expected
Art and design	Satisfactory	As expected	Satisfactory	As expected
Physical education	Satisfactory	As expected	Good	Above the expected level

10. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are adequate and provide reasonable support for their learning in other subjects. Pupils' skills in ICT are unsatisfactory and are not sufficiently developed in most other subjects. No overall judgements could be made about achievement or attainment in design and technology or music in Years 2 or 6, either because there was insufficient evidence or because lessons in these subjects could not be seen during the inspection. No judgements were made in religious education, as it was not part of this inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Overall, pupils' attitudes to school are satisfactory. The attendance of the pupils is very good, although punctuality is unsatisfactory. The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good and leads to good behaviour and relationships.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The great majority of pupils behave well and enjoy being at school.

- The level of attendance is well above that of similar schools around the country.
- Racial harmony is a strength of the school.
- Punctuality at the start of the day is a problem.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independence.

Commentary

11. The table below shows the attendance figures for the school. The level of attendance has fallen in the first two terms of the present school year but is in line to be in the top tenth of schools around the country. Absences are mainly due to medical reasons, though a few families insist on taking holidays during term time. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters of the importance of regular punctual attendance, although a few do not support the school in this. Punctuality in the morning is unsatisfactory. A steady stream of pupils arrives during the first ten minutes after the bell has sounded, with several more arriving later than that. This delays the start of their learning and disrupts the learning of others. Registration takes place efficiently on those days when pupils go straight to the classroom. However, when the day begins with assembly in the hall, registration is delayed until afterwards. The school recognises that a roll call would not be possible if the school needed to be evacuated at that time so is planning to change its procedures to ensure the register is taken immediately on arrival.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year [%]

Authorised absence	
School data:	0.3
National data:	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.1
National data:	0.4

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

12. Pupils' social development is good. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to interact with classmates in group work and in paired discussions. Pupils in Year 6 have a range of responsibilities around the school including supervising the movement of younger pupils. Their awareness of the wider world is enhanced by the range of visitors and by collections for charity. Pupils' relationships with their peers and with adults contribute to the quality of work in lessons and to the progress they make.
13. Opportunities for pupils to gain insight into values and beliefs in order to develop their spiritual awareness are good. As well as providing time for reflection, school assemblies help pupils to celebrate the contributions and achievements of others each week, and contribute to a sense of belonging to a whole school community. Regular discussions in class about issues that concern them and the school's personal, social and health education programme help pupils to appreciate that others have different views, to start to appreciate their own worth and to raise their self-esteem.
14. The provision for cultural development is good. Various subjects provide pupils with a fuller understanding of the world around them with, for example, painting and music developing aesthetic awareness. Pupils are starting to appreciate the western cultural background through nursery rhymes and through work on, for example, the Greeks and Tudors in history and on European artists and composers. The school also fully uses occasions such as Black History month and encourages parents to visit the school to share their own cultural traditions. Pupils from a varied range of different cultures mix well with each other and it is very apparent that racial harmony is one of the strengths of the school, reflecting the positive anti-racist policy of the governors.
15. Pupils' moral development is good. The great majority of pupils behave well in the classroom, at play and lunch-times. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. They are open, polite to adults and to each other and welcoming and courteous to visitors. They move around the school in an orderly way even when not supervised. Even the youngest, in the nursery, wait patiently for other pupils when lining up. The school uses a variety of positive strategies to

encourage good behaviour. However, in some lessons, the inconsistent management of the pupils with, for example, ineffective 'shushing' led to a continuous undercurrent of chatter. This limited the learning taking place. Parents and pupils confirm that the school has effective procedures to deal with any occasional aggressive behaviour. No pupils were excluded last year.

16. Pupils' attitudes towards learning are reflected in the quality of teaching in lessons. This includes those of pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language. Where the teaching is good, they listen attentively and follow instructions well. They usually settle quickly to the tasks given and maintain their interest even when not being directly supported by adults in the classroom. These positive attitudes reflect the good pace and the variety of activities built into the lessons. For these reasons, children at the end of the Foundation Stage are likely to achieve the expected goals for their age in their personal development. Nevertheless, in some lessons, the work was not presented in an interesting way. This led to a lack of attention by some pupils and the unsettled atmosphere limited learning, especially that of Black African and Black Caribbean boys. In addition, in most classes, the teacher closely directs much of the teaching, leading to few opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills. In part, this is a consequence of the cramped accommodation in the old junior school building that houses Years 3 to 6.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory, although there are weaknesses, many of which stem from the recent amalgamation.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although it varies across the school. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but the information is not used well. Overall, the school provides a reasonable curriculum that meets the needs of most of its pupils. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory. Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. All pupils have reasonable access to good levels of support, advice and guidance. Links with parents are good and those with other schools and the community satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well from the nursery to Year 2 because of good teaching.
- A significant proportion of unsatisfactory and poor teaching limits pupils' learning, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- A lack of subject knowledge and poor planning are at the root of much of the unsatisfactory teaching.
- Good assessment procedures are not used to the best effect.
- There is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language achieve well in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 because of good provision.
- Marking is unsatisfactory and does not help promote pupils' involvement or raise achievement.

Commentary

17. Although at the pre-inspection meeting parents commented that in their view teaching is good, inspection evidence indicates that this is not true across the whole school. Overall, teaching, including teaching in English, mathematics and science in Years 1 to 6, is satisfactory. However, good teaching was seen in all year groups. Good or better teaching was most common in the Foundation Stage and Years 2 and 6. In these year groups pupils achieved well. Across the school was a significant proportion of satisfactory teaching. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in most in most year groups except the Foundation Stage. Occasionally, teaching was unsatisfactory. It is because of this inconsistency in the quality of teaching that pupils achieve satisfactorily by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 60 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0)	6 (10)	25 (42)	21(35)	5 (8)	3 (5)	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.

18. In the good lessons teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject or areas of learning and how to teach them. This is particularly true of English and mathematics. Lessons in these subjects using the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are planned well, often identifying different activities for pupils of different abilities. Planning is particularly good in the Foundation Stage. Ongoing assessments of individual children are used well to help identify specific children in the planning so that they receive the correct support or challenge. Teachers know their pupils well, particularly well in the Foundation Stage, and by deliberately choosing interesting and challenging activities that are delivered at a fast pace, and often in a humorous way, they engage pupils' good attitudes and desire to learn. As a result, pupils are productive, collaborate well together and make good gains in their learning. The very good lessons also have these characteristics, but also an element of humour that makes learning fun and imaginative activities that engage pupils very well in their learning.
19. In the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, support for pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language is good. All teachers, including specialist teachers and classroom assistants, work well together to ensure that all pupils are fully included in the work of the class, by tailoring work to their specific needs. In Years 3 to 6, additional support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties through adapting class tasks to their capabilities and through the help of class assistants. However, in many lessons where planning is weak, their needs are not clearly addressed and they do not achieve as well as they could. Support for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need is good because assistants know their pupils well and take an active part in developing their understanding.
20. Even where teaching is good, a common weakness is in the quality of lesson planning, except in the Foundation Stage. In many subjects, such as ICT and history, teachers use their termly and half termly plans to inform their teaching. This rarely identifies the structure of the lesson or what pupils are expected to learn from it, neither does it show planned activities for pupils of different abilities or assessment opportunities. Where teachers have very good subject knowledge they are able to overcome this shortfall, but where teachers' knowledge and understanding are less secure the quality of teaching suffers. Learning intentions are not shared at the start of the lesson so pupils do not know what is expected of them. Lessons have little structure, so there is no clear beginning, middle and end. They therefore lose their pace as discussions or activities become too long and pupils become inattentive and restless. A range of activities is not matched to pupils of different abilities so work is not challenging or stimulating, especially for the more able pupils. Time is often not used well so either pupils have too little time to undertake their work or there is insufficient time at the end of the lesson to review or assess what has been learned. This aspect of assessment is therefore weak and because of this pupils do not know how to improve and are not involved in their own learning.
21. These satisfactory lessons, however, do have other elements to commend them. The most notable of these is the quality of relationships. Because of the high level of care exhibited by most staff, pupils, including those from different ethnic minorities, said they feel safe, secure, and able to ask for help when in difficulty.
22. There is little specific support for pupils who are at a later stage of learning English in Years 3 to 6. This is because the teacher who has done much of this support work in the past now, as part of the school's leadership team, has much of her time taken up with other issues. The school has recognised this and new staff are to be appointed. Where the current specialist

assistant works closely with the class teacher there is good emphasis on language development and pupils achieve well. However, this support is limited and, when in class without support, teachers rarely identify the needs of bilingual pupils or help them to extend their language skills. These pupils do not therefore do as well as they could.

23. When teaching was unsatisfactory, a lack of subject knowledge exacerbated the shortcomings in teachers' planning to such an extent that pupils did not learn as well as they could; they underachieved. Pupils often became inattentive and in the poor lessons this led to unsatisfactory behaviour, especially by boys of a Black African or Black Caribbean heritage, and this was not handled well. Teachers did not make their expectations clear or administer discipline fairly or consistently. The disruption and time-wasting this caused created a poor learning environment where pupils learned little. Through its own monitoring and self-evaluation, the school had already identified specific areas where teaching was weak and had taken appropriate action to start to remedy this. But so far there has been insufficient speed or time to improve the quality of teaching.
24. Assessment is satisfactory. Since the amalgamation the school has established good systems across all subjects and age ranges. Through careful observation and discussions with parents children are carefully assessed when they start nursery. This information is carefully and regularly built on throughout the Foundation Stage by continuous observation and assessment of children against the basic skills. In the rest of the school a computerised system tracks pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science, helping to identify possible underachievement. However, in the past the accuracy of the information entered into the system was not consistent. This reflects some teachers' uncertainty of how to assess pupils against the levels in the National Curriculum. It has therefore been difficult for the school to make accurate predictions about future levels of attainment. This weakness in assessment has already been identified by the school and senior staff have become directly involved in improving and moderating the accuracy of assessment across the school.
25. To involve pupils and parents in assessment in these subjects, the school has also developed a series of booklets that pupils and teachers fill in saying what pupils can do. However, there is no space to identify the next step in a pupil's learning and those targets that pupils write for themselves or are given by teachers are too vague to help pupils improve. In most other subjects teachers assess pupils at the end of a topic or unit of work against a series of nationally agreed expectations. However, this information is not used to change lesson plans so that all pupils make progress in their learning, partly because of the limitations of the current planning format. Because of this, the needs of pupils of different abilities, especially those of the more able, are not identified. They are not set tasks that challenge them and they therefore underachieve. The quality of marking in most subjects is unsatisfactory. It lacks the detailed comments that would help inform pupils about what they need to do to improve. The school in its own evaluation has recognised many of these shortcomings and has plans to improve the quality and usefulness of marking through whole school professional development as part of its wider programme of improving teaching and learning.
26. The assessment of the learning of pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory overall and meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. Independent education plans are reviewed each term, but the targets set are too limited to provide an effective picture of pupils' progress. The procedures for assessing the progress of pupils learning English as an additional language are under review. At present, the procedures for assessing the specific needs of children at an early stage are effective. For pupils at a later stage, the twice yearly tracking of progress is not enough to ensure that their language needs are met. The school undertakes an analysis of pupils' attainment by gender and ethnic background. This has yet to yield any useful information as only one year's set of data has been analysed. Thus no trends in achievement are evident. This comprehensive analysis is only fully undertaken in Years 2 and 6; it is not done in such depth in Years 3, 4 or 5, where a similar set of data exists. Teachers do not therefore know whether particular pupils or groups of pupils need support or challenge. Equally this lack of

analysis means that teachers do not regularly change their teaching styles or methods to meet the different learning styles of individual pupils or groups of pupils.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good in the nursery and reception classes and satisfactory in the rest of the school. The provision for out-of-class activities is satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory overall, although they are good in the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision in the Foundation Stage is good.
- Accommodation issues in Years 3 to 6 are leading to an imbalance in the curriculum, with certain aspects of some subjects being under emphasised.
- Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.
- The development of pupils' learning is hindered by the lack of joint planning in some subjects.
- Preparation for secondary school in Year 6 is good.

Commentary

27. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The curriculum in the nursery and reception classes is good, providing young children with a firm base on which to build. There are meaningful and relevant links made between different areas of learning, as was seen in a history lesson that also contributed well to the development of pupils' writing skills.
28. The curriculum is well planned in the Foundation Stage and supports children's good achievement. As a solution to some of the issues that have arisen as a consequence of the recent amalgamation, the staff have taken on commercial schemes, for example in history and physical education. However, they do not adapt them to suit the needs of their pupils or consistently work together to write their termly plans. As a result, the work the pupils do is sometimes not at the expected level for their age and ability, and work in parallel classes is not always of the same standard or depth. This hinders pupils' achievement and also means that it is hard for other teachers to know what pupils have studied and learned in previous years and to build on that effectively.
29. The school enriches the curriculum by making good use of visitors and visits such as trips to galleries, museums and places of local interest. However, there are few after-school clubs for pupils to take part in.
30. Equality of access and opportunity is satisfactory overall. In many instances pupils are given good access to the curriculum, but they are not always given the opportunity to do their best. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory, although it is good for the youngest pupils and children. They are well supported by numerous and experienced support staff and teachers are more adept at meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities when the ability range is not as great as it is for the older pupils. However, the support provided by teaching assistants in Years 3 to 6, as in the case of a Year 6 physical education lesson, enables pupils with learning difficulties to have full access to the curriculum and to develop the skills that underpin their progress. The school has successfully accommodated the needs of physically disabled pupils by splitting year groups and having some classes on the ground floor. Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language is very good in the nursery and reception classes. This is because there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills through play. Provision is also good in Years 1 and 2, but satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. This is because as pupils get older there is a greater focus on written work at the expense of oral skills and also a lack of thorough assessments and an awareness of how to meet the needs of more fluent bilingual pupils.
31. Good facilities in the nursery and reception classes enable the teachers to provide good play opportunities, both inside and out. This helps to promote good achievement. Accommodation in Years 1 and 2 is adequate, but that in Years 3 to 6 is unsatisfactory. On many occasions the school makes good use of the accommodation it has but it is very cramped. This has a negative impact on pupils' achievement, particularly in those subjects that have a strong

practical element, such as art and design. Aspects of subjects such as science and mathematics that incorporate practical work or that require pupils to work independently in groups are also affected. Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory. Lack of space and resources hinders pupils' achievement in ICT and as a consequence standards are below those expected.

32. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good. But as a result of a number of unsatisfactory lessons being seen, some of which were due to weak subject knowledge, the match of teachers to the curriculum is unsatisfactory. In addition to this, because of the amalgamation, some subject co-ordinators do not have the relevant knowledge or experience to support colleagues throughout Years 1 to 6. There is a high number of unqualified staff, but none of them taught unsatisfactory lessons.
33. The school has a satisfactory programme for teaching personal, social, health and emotional education. This includes sex education and drugs and alcohol awareness for older pupils.
34. Preparation for secondary school in Year 6 is good. The headteacher meets with the pupils' parents to offer them guidance and pupils visit and meet staff from the local secondary schools. Teachers from these schools often visit St Dominic's, meet the pupils and teach lessons.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are satisfactory overall and support pupils' learning. The involvement of pupils in the school's work through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring are sound.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are weaknesses in the procedures to ensure a safe learning environment.
- Pupils trust the teachers and other staff and know there is always someone to whom they can turn.
- The school provides a variety of opportunities for pupils to express opinions about life in the school.
- The quality of support for pupils' academic development is not consistent across the school.

Commentary

35. The procedures for child protection are good. The school follows the local procedures and staff receive guidance each year on how to deal with any concerns that may arise. The arrangements for first aid are also good, with most staff trained, records kept of treatment and letters to parents after bumped heads and other accidents. The procedures for ensuring a safe school are generally satisfactory though the record keeping is not up to date. Whilst the governors are involved in touring the school to identify any problems, none of the governing body minutes showed when this took place, nor was there a record in the health and safety file. There is also no record of any audits by the local authority. Similarly, risk assessments are undated and in some instances, whilst identifying some activities as presenting a high risk, there were no notes as to what the school was doing to minimise them. The school intends seeking the assurance of the local authority that all relevant procedures are properly in place and up to date.
36. The induction arrangements for pupils newly arriving in the nursery or the reception classes are satisfactory, with opportunities for parents to meet the staff and for the children to visit the school before they start full time. The staff do not yet visit new children in their homes, though this is planned. The nursery children come to the main school assemblies, making them aware of the larger community as well as enabling them to become familiar with where they will be in the reception class. The school ensures fellow classmates are assigned to support pupils who

arrive further up the school. Pupils are enabled to influence what happens in the school during circle time and by means of the recently established school council, with good use made of a suggestion box.

37. The procedures for personal development are informal, though staff know the pupils well and this provides them with good support and guidance. Teachers raise pupils' self-esteem by a range of rewards such as praise and the awarding of smiley faces together with the highlighting of children of the month. Meals supervisors also award certificates to pupils who behave well. Pupils who have particular problems with behaviour or with emotional difficulties are well supported by a member of staff who is a learning mentor and a parent who is a trained counsellor. In their academic work pupils consider that they are supported well by the staff and have the confidence to seek help when necessary. Children's achievement is well supported in the Foundation Stage by good regular observations and assessments made of all children. The early identification and support for pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties is also good for the youngest pupils, although due to limited personnel, weaker planning and limited assessment it is not as good for older and more fluent pupils. The good assessment and tracking procedures that the school currently employs are not used well to provide pupils with the best support and guidance, as this information does not inform teachers' planning, inform the setting of specific objectives or identify the needs or learning styles of different pupils across all year groups. The lack of consistency in assessing pupils' attainment also means that the current tracking system is not robust enough to fully identify possible underachievement.

Partnership with parents, other schools, and the community

Links with parents are good overall. Links with the local community and other schools are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- The parents' support at home and in school makes a good contribution to pupils' achievement.
- Annual reports on children's progress vary in quality between classes.

Commentary

38. In their response to the school's own questionnaire and at the meeting, parents showed that they are pleased with what the school provides. Their children like school, the friendly staff respond to any concerns and all pupils are encouraged to do their best. Parents consider that they are well informed about their children's progress and have clear information on how to help at home.
39. The school sends home regular newsletters and other letters about general matters and, each term, guidance on how parents can work with their children. Teachers are readily available. In particular, parents are welcomed into the playground and the nursery with their children at the start of the day. From the relaxed, informal conversations seen to take place during the inspection, it is apparent that parents are comfortable talking to the staff. The annual reports on pupils' progress in the summer term, due to the use of a computerised system and some careful monitoring by the school's leadership, generally have a good summary of what the children know and can do in each subject. Nevertheless, the quantity and quality vary between classes, with little reference made to what the pupils know and can do in some subjects. Targets are often inadequate, being very general such as 'continue to work hard'.
40. Parents' involvement with the school makes a good contribution to its work and to pupils' achievement. Some parents are in the classroom at the start of the school day, hearing pupils read. Parents are also prepared to help during the day and to accompany trips out. Pupils confirm that their parents either help with homework or ensure it is completed. Reading records show that many hear their children read, including up to Year 6. The parent teacher association

organises both fund raising and social events. The school sends out questionnaires to enable parents to be actively involved in improving what the school offers. This has recently led to the setting up of a breakfast club. However, a proportion of parents do not always ensure their children arrive at school on time.

41. The school's links with other schools and the community at large help to broaden the experiences for pupils' personal, social and academic development. There are many good links with the community. Pupils benefit from a good variety of visitors such as police, drama groups and from different trips out both locally and further afield. There are also many opportunities to meet other people in the community through activities such as singing in a hospice and taking part in local dancing and singing festivals. Particular mention must, of course, be made of the links with the two parish churches that provide excellent opportunities to extend pupils' understanding of the Catholic faith. However, overall links are satisfactory because these partnerships are not fully exploited so that the school can tap into skills and resources that strengthen and inform governance, decision-making and pupils' learning. Links with a local nursery help to prepare children for when they arrive in the reception class. Contacts at the secondary level also help to smooth the transfer of pupils at the end of Year 6. However, there are few contacts with other primary schools to enable curriculum co-ordinators to meet and to share good practice that would help strengthen the curriculum and teaching.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, governance and management are all satisfactory but there are weaknesses in the effectiveness of the management of teaching and the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear educational vision.
- The headteacher has achieved a great deal in setting up the new school.
- The action taken to improve the quality of teaching has not been effective enough.
- The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good.
- Strategic planning is not rigorous enough to form a sound basis for improvement.
- Not all governors take an active role in challenging the school.

Commentary

42. The leadership of the headteacher has many positive qualities. She has a clear vision of one school providing quality education and provides a good role model for staff and pupils. Most staff and governors share her strong commitment to equality for all pupils, irrespective of gender, ethnicity or linguistic background. She has been successful in bringing about changes to fulfil the vision. She has taken a number of good and carefully considered steps to bring the staff of the two previous schools together and has set up an organisational framework that draws on the strengths of both schools. She has set out clear expectations for staff and pupils and, since the amalgamation less than two years ago, has created senior and middle management teams that support the work of the school with growing effectiveness. The headteacher appreciates the difficulties with which the school operates and the challenges posed by the amalgamation. She acknowledges many of the key areas of improvement; notably, the quality of teaching, the use of assessment, the accommodation and the weaknesses in subject co-ordination. Appropriate action has been taken to date to address these issues and improvements are being made, for example, in the fabric of the building. Plans and strategies exist that will continue to tackle these areas.
43. However, the realisation of the vision of one school and the ability to deal with significant levels of unsatisfactory teaching are being slowed because planning is not strategic enough. Currently, the school improvement plan provides sound guidance for staff and governors on actions that are intended to raise standards. However, this does not adequately identify those aspects of the school which require the most urgent attention, for example the consistency and quality of teaching and learning. This, coupled with a lack of specific success criteria that relate

to pupils' achievement, makes it difficult for the governors to evaluate the school's effectiveness or how well it is improving. Leadership of the school is therefore satisfactory.

44. Although on a day-to-day basis the school runs smoothly, the amalgamation of two schools created significant difficulties and initially the headteacher had no assistant headteachers to support her. The newly appointed assistant headteachers have developed their knowledge and skills and provide increasingly effective support. The senior management team, again a relatively new group, is beginning to present a robust body that can effect change. The co-ordination of the Foundation Stage, the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and subjects such as physical education and ICT are good. Where provision is good the co-ordinators have the knowledge and skill to bring about change through their vision, perseverance and ability to inspire others.
45. Different levels of management and leadership in the school are beginning to deal with some of the issues that the school faces, but the pace of this change is being slowed and the effects of recent changes are being minimised because the effectiveness of management is unsatisfactory. In many subjects co-ordination is satisfactory and in others such as history and geography it is unsatisfactory. Although co-ordinators and middle managers share the headteacher's desire to raise achievement and have had training and support in developing their management skills and knowledge of age ranges that they have not previously taught, these new skills and knowledge are not yet embedded enough for them to make a significant impact on school improvement. Because of this and the lack of time to deal with all the issues arising from the amalgamation, the consistency of teaching and learning across the school, particularly Years 3 to 6, as well as aspects of the curriculum, remains a concern.
46. The temporary governing body carries out its role satisfactorily. It ensures that statutory requirements are met. The small group of very active governors has a good grasp of some of the school's strengths, such as its Catholic ethos and the loyalty of staff, and its weaknesses, such as the weak performance of pupils in Year 6 in the 2003 national tests and the problems created by cramped accommodation.
47. However, there is not a deep appreciation of the quality of what the school provides when compared with other schools nationally. So, although the governing body has done much to support the school through the process of amalgamation, it does not always give clear direction and support as to how the school is to develop at a strategic level. A few governors regularly and carefully challenge the school by asking searching questions to help it raise performance, but there are some who do not. It is these governors who do not have a secure view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
48. Financial management is satisfactory. Governors have played a valuable role in agreeing budgets and monitoring spending. The principles of best value are central to management and the use of resources. The budget for the 2003-2004 financial year shows a large carry forward of 11 per cent from the previous financial year. Of this a large proportion is being held to fund agreed improvements to the accommodation over the next two years. The remainder is marked for maintenance and contingencies. The difference in the carry forward from the previous year to the current year is accounted for by spending on improvements to the accommodation.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,573,805	Balance from previous year	177,901
Total expenditure	1,616,303	Balance carried forward to the next	145,604
Expenditure per pupil	3,521		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

49. The **good provision** in the **Foundation Stage** provides all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, those from different ethnic minorities and those learning English as an additional language, with a good start to their education; they **all achieve well**. This is because:

- teaching and learning are good;
- children's progress is carefully monitored;
- their learning experiences are well planned.

Most aspects of children's development are well promoted but this is not always true of their independence. Children, especially in reception, are encouraged to make some choices regarding equipment or tools in their creative work but they are not always given the chance to decide what activities they would like to undertake or how to undertake them. There are 53 children in the reception classes: 31 girls and 22 boys. There are a further 49 children in the nursery who attend either in the morning or afternoon. They start school the term after their third birthday. Overall, attainment on entry is well below that expected for their age; language development and personal development are the two weakest areas. Twenty-seven per cent of children are at an early stage of English acquisition. The arrangements for children's induction into the Foundation Stage are satisfactory; parents are pleased with this. Children's good achievement is also promoted because of a good ratio of adults to children that ensures their needs are well met and they are well cared for. The accommodation, both inside and outside, is good and resources are plentiful. They are well used to enhance children's learning. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is good. The co-ordinator is a very good practitioner and offers a good role model for others. He has built a cohesive team of adults who have worked hard to introduce many good initiatives both in teaching and the curriculum in an attempt to overcome some of the barriers to learning, especially children's language development and personal development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Trusting, warm relationships result in a pleasant place to learn and confident and happy children.
- Well established routines and good models of behaviour promote an orderly community.

Commentary

50. As a result of their knowledge of the children and acts of kindness, all adults establish warm and trusting relationships. Children enjoy coming to school and nursery staff make sure that their daily routines are well established. Children settle quickly and happily into school life, a feature confirmed by parents. The good teamwork among the adults and the good role models that they provide make clear the school's high expectations. As a result, many children are attentive and co-operative; they often take turns in games. Most of their behaviour is good, but a few, particularly boys in the nursery, find it difficult to concentrate and behave well. However, due to teachers' persistence, children achieve well and behaviour in reception is uniformly good. Due to children's weak personal development on entry to nursery, this area of learning, especially in relation to belonging to a group, sharing and following rules and routines, is given a very high priority throughout the Foundation Stage. Not only is it reflected in all activities, there are also specific times dedicated to it during the day, for example in discussing what makes a good listener or a special friend. As a result of this and the good teaching and all-round

provision, all children achieve very well in this area and the majority are likely to meet the expected level at the end of reception.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's language development is given a high priority.
- Children achieve well because of good teaching.
- There is good provision for the development of reading and writing skills.
- Children learning English as an additional language achieve very well because of good and plentiful additional support.
- Children's progress is carefully monitored.

Commentary

51. The school correctly views children's weak language skills as a barrier to raising achievement. Many lessons are therefore linked well to the planned programme that leads to the accepted level for five-year-olds in communication, language and literacy.
52. Teachers in both the nursery and reception develop children's listening skills well; children have many opportunities to talk and listen. Adults insist children are attentive and ensure that their teaching is lively and the topics interesting so that children want to listen. Adults regularly take part in meaningful conversation with them and encourage them to speak. Staff, support staff and especially the teacher for pupils learning English as an additional language continually extend children's vocabulary by focusing on subject-specific language in other areas of learning. Although they may be hesitant in the nursery, by the time they are in reception children have the confidence to talk. However, many lack the confidence to speak clearly and often speak in incomplete sentences.
53. There is a good emphasis on the recognition of sounds to help children read and write. Children are regularly taught the sounds that letters make and these sounds are often reinforced during the day. Because of the availability of books and the numerous stories read to them, children's reading and writing are well developed in both the nursery and reception. Most children enjoy being read to. The good choice of books that are usually linked to a specific theme, such as 'The Slimy Snail' in reception (linked to the study of minibeasts), help to develop attentive listeners with a growing interest in books and the printed word. All teachers make good use of story time to identify key sounds, words and pictures so children understand the elements such as the characters and the order of the story. Detailed class records show that children in the reception classes are regularly heard to read. Their progress is carefully monitored and the next step in their learning clearly identified. Children take books home on a regular basis.
54. Children are given regular opportunities to experiment with making marks and writing, often linked to themes, such as butterflies in the nursery. Children in reception are taught how to form their letters. However, even when tracing over letters and words, their shapes are not always immediately recognisable. Only a few children write independently, many either dictate to an adult what they want to write or trace the words that have been written for them.
55. Because of good teaching throughout the Foundation Stage, children achieve well, and at times very well, for example those children at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection many children performed at levels below those expected in their language development, but school-based evidence, assessments and predictions conclude that most children are likely to meet the expected goals by the end of the reception year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of well structured teaching.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well to support both individuals and groups.
- Planned activities do not always challenge the most able.
- Basic number facts are constantly reinforced throughout the day.

Commentary

56. Under the sensitive direction of adults in the nursery, children are encouraged to count and match numbers to labels, of which there are many in the well displayed classroom. Teachers carefully plan activities that cover the full range of mathematical development when the children are playing with the water, sand or in the class shop where everything is priced. Learning is also good because teachers, as in the case of the lesson in reception on being able to recognise and continue patterns, provide a good range of games, songs and printing activities. Work is often planned for children of different abilities, but there is sometimes insufficient difference between higher and average attaining children. The good ratio of adults to children and the well briefed and experienced teaching assistants ensure children with learning difficulties achieve well. New words are given specific attention and are often very well explained, using pictures and other visual clues so that children learning English as an additional language understand and achieve well, as well as taking part in all the planned activities. Given these indications and because of this consistently good and enthusiastic teaching, many children achieve well and are likely to be close to meeting the expected goals in this area of learning by the start of Year 1.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well planned to make meaningful links between different areas of learning.
- Good teaching for teachers and support staff enhances children's knowledge and understanding of the world well.

Commentary

57. Very focused and well planned teaching opportunities provide a good range of opportunities to extend children's understanding of the wider world. Activities are often based on real experiences that require children to use their language and mathematical skills, for example the study of caterpillars and butterflies in the nursery and snails in the reception. The very fact that they have live specimens in the classroom brings this aspect of learning alive to many and often brings a real sense of wonder and enjoyment to their learning. Good use of is made of the local community, with children visiting local shops and making models of the local area. All this supports children's good achievement in understanding where they live. Children have regular use of the computer. They have relevant computer programs and the children develop their skills and confidence well because of good adult support. Whereas many children in nursery lack mouse control, those in reception use it confidently, although many only recognise a few of the keys on the keyboard. Due to good teaching, many children achieve well and are likely to be close to meeting the expected outcomes in this area of learning.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Due to careful instruction children achieve well.
- Daily use is made of the good outdoor space and good resources.
- Regular lessons in the hall further develop children's skills in reception.

Commentary

58. There are well planned and organised times and opportunities for children to improve their physical skills both in the hall and outside. During the daily, supervised outdoor sessions children in the nursery and reception have access to a good range of equipment that develops well their skills of balancing and co-ordination and their sense of space. In the reception classes these are extended further in a brisk series of short and sharply focused activities in the hall. However, there was not a great deal of opportunity for children, as in the case of skipping, to be independent or perform for others. During the school day there are various learning areas that encourage them to use a good range of tools and materials. Good adult support provides guidance so that children achieve well, for example demonstrating how to use scissors, hold a paintbrush and decide on shapes and colours. However, the fine manipulative skills of many children are weak. As a result of this good teaching and good accommodation and resources, many children are likely to be close to meeting the goals in this areas of their development.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy a wide range of well planned experiences.
- Children's singing is good because of the support of a music specialist.
- Spacious, well equipped classrooms promote children's development well.

Commentary

59. A range of well planned art and design activities improves children's learning. Children use a wide range of materials. Although there was not a great deal of independence while they explored and investigated the materials that they used when making their 'fabulous bugs' in reception, the teaching assistant, through her questioning, developed pupils' designing and making skills well. Children use tools safely and can offer reasonable suggestions and explanations for their choices. The teaching of singing at the school is particularly good and the children in the Foundation Stage benefit greatly from being taught by a visiting music specialist. Carefully chosen pieces of music promoted children's musical development well as they had to sit and listen and follow rhythms. Children in the Foundation Stage are also given regular opportunities to learn simple songs and chants, many of which support their learning in other areas of development, while the rendition of pop songs in the reception class promotes a strong sense of community and enjoyment. Each classroom has a well equipped corner that encourages imaginative play. Following a visit to local shops, classroom shops acted as a focus for activities that developed their imagination as well as their literacy and numeracy skills. Furthermore, the outside area in the nursery is used well for numerous games and activities such as washing. Due to good teaching, many children are likely to be close to meeting the expected outcomes in this area of learning by the time they start Year 1.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in reading and writing by the end of Year 2.
- Standards in reading in Year 6 are good.
- Standards in speaking and listening are below average throughout the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is too variable.
- Assessment, including marking, does not promote good achievement.
- Library accommodation is poor.

Commentary

60. Results in the 2003 national tests in Year 2 were above average in both reading and writing and well above average when compared with those of pupils in similar schools. In relation to their prior attainment these pupils achieved well.
61. In Year 6, results in the 2003 tests were well below average and below those in similar schools. The school regards the 2003 results and the pupils' underachievement as an anomaly caused by exceptional factors, the most significant of which was the process of amalgamation of the formerly separate infant and junior schools. Uncertainties and building work disrupted the learning of pupils over a lengthy period of time.

Current standards in Years 2 and 6

62. Overall, in the current Year 2, standards are in line with those expected. Almost all pupils have reached the expected level for their age, although few have reached a higher level. Nevertheless, average levels of attainment represent good achievement for these pupils as most of them entered the school with language skills well below national expectations.
63. Inspection evidence supports the school's view, in that current standards in Year 6 are much better. Achievement for those pupils now in Year 6 is overall satisfactory and is better than that of the previous year because these pupils have had a more settled education. Pupils achieve differently at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and in different areas of their language development, due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

	By the end of Year 2		By the end of Year 6	
	Achievement	Attainment	Achievement	Attainment
Speaking and listening	Satisfactory	Below those expected	Satisfactory	Below those expected
Reading	Good	In line with those expected	Good	Above those expected
Writing	Good	In line with those expected	Satisfactory	In line with those expected

64. Pupils with learning difficulties, as well as those learning English as an additional language, achieve well in Years 1 and 2 because they are well supported and many reach the expected level for their age. In Years 3 to 6 these pupils make satisfactory progress due to limitations in the use of assessment information and the necessity to prepare for a far greater range of ability than in Years 1 and 2. Although there were differences between the attainment of boys and girls and pupils of different ethnic backgrounds in the 2003 national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6, there was no evidence of this during the inspection. However, it was noted during the inspection that the progress of those older and more fluent pupils learning English as an additional

language is more limited as the tracking of their progress and support offered in Years 3 to 6 is not as good as in Years 1 and 2.

65. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection and some was good or very good, notably in Years 1, 3 and 6. One of the strongest features is the good relationships teachers have with their pupils, enabling them to control behaviour and avoid delays to the learning process. There is good use of any additional adults in the classroom, whether teachers or support assistants. However, the provision for more competent readers does not encourage more able pupils to achieve their best. For example, comments about pupils' reading, mostly by support assistants, do not provide them with advice on how they can improve. Most classrooms, especially in Years 1 and 2, have a wide variety of print on display, which encourages pupils to read extensively and introduces them well to a variety of writing styles. Teachers model the reading and writing processes in a way that enables pupils to learn well. They ask good questions that challenge pupils to think more deeply and to infer answers by referring to the text. However, the main factor slowing progress is that expectations about pupils' work are too low, especially in Years 4 and 5, and there is a lack of challenge for more able pupils; some of the writing tasks they are given are not challenging enough. A weak feature of teaching in most classes is marking that, although encouraging pupils, gives them no indication of how they can improve their work.
66. Good use is being made of the structures provided by the National Literacy Strategy to develop reading and writing skills across the school. But there is no systematic programme to develop the skills of speaking and listening throughout the school and this limits pupils' achievement in this aspect of English. This development is further hindered in Years 3 to 6 because the cramped accommodation for these year groups is not conducive to pupils speaking in smaller groups within the classroom. Although many teachers provide practice in listening and speaking, they miss opportunities to check how effective their provision is. For example, in most classes, teachers ask pupils to discuss with a 'talking partner', but rarely ask a pupil to report the partner's responses. The school library is inadequate for the task of giving older pupils experience of working independently to gain a range of research skills. As a result, library skills are comparatively weak and few pupils know the classification systems in use in most public libraries. The school recognises that the library is too small and the headteacher has plans to incorporate better provision into new building work. Due to a lack of resources, little use is made of computer technology to support learning in literacy lessons.
67. Pupils' good achievement in reading is promoted by good support from parents as evident in the home-school reading diaries. Pupils, even in Year 6, continue to read regularly to parents or other adults, even if only in the car on the way to school.
68. The subject leader's leadership and management are satisfactory. Following last year's low results, the school has taken a good range of initiatives to improve writing. There has been insufficient time for these fully to take effect or for their implementation to be evaluated thoroughly. The co-ordinator has extensive experience of leading the subject in the junior years but the amalgamation has greatly increased her workload. She has insufficient time or assistance to monitor teaching and the work of pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2 where she has less expertise. There has also been insufficient time to check the teacher-assessed levels pupils have reached. Some of the assessment data entered into the school's computerised tracking system is inaccurate. This exemplifies teachers' lack of skill and confidence in undertaking assessments. It also makes the task of predicting future performance, setting targets and analysing data more difficult.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. Good opportunities are taken to increase the relevance of work in literacy by linking it to other subjects. For example, Year 6 work during the inspection linked well to work in geography on rainforests, although these links are not made explicit in teachers' planning or in school policy. Visits to places of interest are used to stimulate pupils' writing across a range of subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and pupils achieve well.
- The uneven quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 limits pupils' achievement.
- There is insufficient challenge for the more able.
- In Years 1 and 2, provision is good for pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language.
- The curriculum in Years 3 to 6 is unbalanced.
- Opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects are limited.

Commentary

70. Current standards in Year 2 are in line with those expected and are comparable with the standards reached by pupils in national tests in 2003. Pupils' achievement in these years is good because teaching is good. When compared with similar schools, pupil performance is well above the average.
71. Standards at the end of Year 6 in the 2003 national tests were well below the national average and in relation to their prior attainment these pupils made poor progress. This was because these pupils faced a great deal of disruption caused by the amalgamation and changes in staffing. It is also reported by the school that a significant proportion of girls had poor attitudes to learning; this accounts for their low levels of attainment which is much lower than that found nationally. Far fewer of the more able pupils achieved Level 5 than in similar schools.
72. The school expects a significantly higher proportion of pupils to reach the expected level in the 2004 national tests than in 2003 and evidence from the inspection supports this; standards seen during the inspection were close to the expected level. However, as in 2003, few pupils are likely to gain above this. There are, however, differences in standards across the various strands of the mathematics curriculum. Standards in areas such as number and shape and space are close to the expected level. As insufficient time is devoted to data handling and investigative work, standards are lower and it also means that the curriculum is unbalanced. The achievement of the majority of pupils in Year 6, in relation to their standards at the end of Year 2, is satisfactory. It is unsatisfactory for those with the potential to reach higher standards.
73. By the end of Year 2 pupils with learning difficulties make good progress overall in relation to their capabilities because of the good support they receive from teachers and support staff. This is also true of pupils learning English as an additional language. However, by the end of Year 6, although these two groups make satisfactory progress, it is not as good as in Years 1 and 2 because of less additional support and less effective teaching. Although differences were noted between the attainment of boys and girls and pupils of different ethnic backgrounds in the Years 2 and 6 national tests in 2003, there was no evidence to support this noted during the inspection.
74. Achievement differs between Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 to 6 because of the quality of teaching. Overall it is satisfactory, but there are significant differences. In Years 1 and 2 it is good and in Years 3 to 6 it is satisfactory. In the good lessons, teachers explain the work clearly, using visual aids and setting problems in familiar contexts, such as shopping or counting passengers on or off a bus, so as to help pupils understand. Such activities provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and are keen to contribute answers and to explain their reasons for them. This also helps their language development. When working on individual tasks, teachers and class assistants give pupils good support so that all pupils are able to achieve well. Pupils work with concentration and effort and enjoy solving mental and written problems.

75. Although teaching in Year 6 is good and pupils achieve well, in Years 4 and 5 it is satisfactory and pupils achieve less well. This is because there is a noticeable difference in the quality of teaching between parallel classes. Lesson observations and the analysis of pupils' work often indicate that in some classes it is good but in the parallel class it is often less so. In Year 6 achievement improves because teaching is more challenging and pupils respond well to this. The improvement is also due to the additional support provided for targeted pupils from specialist support staff, for example those paid to support pupils from ethnic minorities. However, although teachers sometimes provide additional tasks for pupils with the potential to reach higher standards, these are insufficient to provide the challenge for these pupils to do as well as they could. The cramped accommodation in the classrooms in the old junior building often constrains more active teaching styles and pupils' involvement in group investigations or practical work that would deepen their understanding, provide them with challenging work and develop their independence. The very little use of ICT in mathematics work is unsatisfactory.
76. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory overall. Pupils' progress in mathematics is tracked year by year and this is used to inform target setting. Although there have been inconsistencies in assessing pupils' work, the headteacher and assistant headteachers have worked hard to remedy this and earmarked assessment as an area for whole school development. Work in pupils' books is mostly marked with ticks with little or no comment and there is no guidance given to pupils on how to improve their work.
77. The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory. The co-ordinator regularly monitors teaching and curriculum planning across the school and gives useful oral and written feedback to teachers. She is very experienced in the work of Years 1 and 2, but has less knowledge of the curriculum in Years 3 to 6 and this inhibits her ability to secure improvement. To improve this situation the co-ordinator has undertaken professional development to extend her expertise and develop her management skills in order to improve the quality of provision and pupils' achievement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

78. Pupils have opportunities to apply their knowledge of number and to some extent their knowledge of shapes and measure. In history, for example, pupils' study of different historical periods helps to consolidate their understanding of measurement of time and in science pupils apply their knowledge of number and measures. However, due to a lack of detailed planning at all levels and a lack of guidance, all the opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their mathematical skills are not fully used.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 2 in 2003 were above those expected.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language achieve well.
- More able pupils do not do as well as they could.
- Lack of detailed planning resulted in some poor lessons and underachievement.
- Accommodation restrictions inhibit the delivery of the full curriculum.
- The new procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress lack rigour.

Commentary

79. Teacher-assessed science results for pupils in Year 2 in 2003 were above average when compared with all schools and with similar schools. Because of a less able year group, current standards in Year 2 are lower this year, broadly in line with national expectations, and pupils are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their capabilities and prior attainment.

80. In 2003 standards attained by pupils in Year 6 were well below average when compared with all schools and below average when compared with similar schools. A significant number of girls underachieved and very few pupils achieved the higher Level 5. In relation to their prior attainment pupils made poor progress because of their disrupted education in Years 3 to 6. Current standards in Year 6 are close to being in line with national expectations, although too few pupils are working at the higher Level 5. In relation to their prior attainment they have achieved satisfactorily. No changes in teaching staff and no building work this year have promoted better achievement. However, the weakest area of learning for most pupils is scientific enquiry. This is because the cramped conditions in which many pupils in Years 3 to 6 are taught does not easily lend itself to practical investigations. The lack of scientific skills that can be developed through practical work prevents pupils working above the expected level for their age. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are used satisfactorily but due to a lack of resources ICT is insufficiently used.
81. Pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language achieve well because of the good support they receive through additional adult support and work that is closely matched to their abilities; this is particularly true in Years 3 to 6. Although differences between the attainment of boys and girls and those of different ethnic backgrounds were noted in the 2003 results in both Year 2 and 6, during the inspection no significant differences were noted.
82. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, but it can vary from good to poor. As a consequence the rate at which pupils learn is not consistent. The good lessons were based on teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding. These teachers used questioning well to stimulate pupils' thinking, accurately planned work for pupils of different abilities and also incorporated a strong focus on practical activities. A good example of this was seen in the Year 6 lesson that investigated whether the length of the wire affects the brightness of a bulb. These pockets of good teaching often accelerate pupils to make up for the weaker teaching, so pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve the expected level at the end of Year 6.
83. Many lessons throughout the school had good features. These included:
- good support from teaching assistants for pupils with learning difficulties so that they made good progress;
 - on many occasions, especially in Years 1 and 2, good use was made of visual clues to promote good learning by pupils learning English as an additional language;
 - good relationships foster good attitudes and behaviour;
 - the brisk pace of learning maintains pupils' interest well.
84. A common weakness in many lessons was the lack of detailed plans that covered the activity. As many lessons were based on brief plans that covered a half term period, they lacked a clear focus, structure or detail so that the pace of many lessons was steady rather than invigorating and work was not planned for pupils of different abilities. As a consequence, learning was steady and more able pupils were not always suitably challenged.
85. The poor lessons resulted from a lack of subject knowledge by the class teacher and from poor discipline. Pupils were given incorrect scientific information, the pace of the lesson was so slow that pupils became inattentive and restless and so the teacher spent too much time attempting to control the class rather than teach; most pupils learnt little.
86. The new assessment system lacks rigour and is therefore unsatisfactory. Often teachers' own subject knowledge is weak and in the past this has led to inconsistency in assessments and the levelling of pupils' work. This has hindered the setting of accurate targets and the identification of groups or individuals who may be underachieving. The end-of-unit assessments are not detailed enough to enable staff to monitor pupils' progress closely. Therefore teachers do not use the information gained to change their lesson plans and improve the matching of tasks to the needs and abilities of the pupils. Teachers' marking does not involve pupils in their own learning or support their learning as it does not identify how pupils

can improve their work. The school has recognised many of these problems as a whole school issue and has already correctly targeted assessment as an area of development.

87. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a reasonable overview of the subject and has identified the relevant areas of the provision that need to be improved, such as investigative and practical work, but not all the priorities have been clearly or precisely communicated in a development plan. Resources are well managed and organised but since the amalgamation there has been insufficient time for close monitoring of the subject and for providing support and guidance to staff to improve teaching and pupil achievement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Due to a shortage of resources and limited accommodation pupils underachieve.
- Good leadership is paving the way for improvement.

Commentary

88. Because of the problems with accommodation, limited access to computers and availability of resources, standards in both Years 2 and 6 are below those expected and all pupils irrespective of gender, ethnicity or ability underachieve.
89. The most significant problems facing the school since amalgamation, especially for Years 3 to 6, are lack of space and limited resources. As classes in these year groups do not have a computer, pupils have limited opportunities to practise their skills. It is better in Years 1 and 2 where each room has its own computer. The availability of relevant computer programs is also limited. This causes the curriculum to be unbalanced, as insufficient emphasis can be placed on strands such as developing and making things happen. The computer suite, housed in the old junior building, is inadequate. It is too small for a whole class of pupils and this restricts teachers' ability to teach or manage pupils. During the inspection the room became very hot because of the bright sunshine; this added to pupils' restlessness and inattentiveness while in the room. To compensate, windows are often left open, but the noise from a busy main road added further distraction to the learning environment. The school has far fewer computers than is recommended and those in the suite are not up to date. When in the suite some pupils share a keyboard and invariably a small group of pupils have to work on a related task on a table in the middle of the room. These pupils do not get equality of opportunity because, if they do get the chance to use a computer during the lesson, their time is severely restricted.
90. Although teaching is satisfactory, given the conditions, on many occasions the quality of teaching adds further to their underachievement. The positive points of much of the teaching include:
- the way teaching assistants are used to guide and support pupils when they are in the suite;
 - clear sharing of the learning intentions at the start of the lesson so pupils know what is expected of them
 - good relationships that ensure that lessons, even in the restricted space, are relatively orderly.
91. However, it is extremely difficult to maintain order and a purposeful learning environment in the suite because it is far too cramped. Pupils are not, therefore, as productive as they could be. Three further factors also foster pupils' underachievement:
- teachers are too directive in their questioning and demonstrations. Pupils are not therefore encouraged to think for themselves or explain their work;
 - activities do not challenge most pupils because they require them to undertake simple tasks rather than apply their knowledge;

- planning lacks detail, a sharp focus on what is to be taught and any mention of activities for pupils of different abilities, because little use is made of the end-of-topic assessments that have been started this year.

92. The weaknesses in the provision have been fully recognised by both the headteacher and the recently appointed co-ordinator. They both share a vision of improved provision and have secured funding to fulfil this. New computers and resources were to arrive shortly after the inspection, although the improvements in the accommodation will not provide more space. Good management complements the co-ordinator's good leadership. The co-ordinator has not only undertaken professional development herself in ICT, but also encouraged others to do so and has supported colleagues on an individual basis. She also has good insight into the need to develop both planning and assessment in order to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

93. The use of ICT in most subjects of the National Curriculum is poor because of a lack of resources and access to computers.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision for history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Due to good levels of supervision, pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties are well supported.
- Pupils do not learn at a constant rate because of weaknesses in teaching.
- The history curriculum and pupils' learning is enriched by good use of the community and purposeful links with other subjects.
- Assessment is not fully developed.
- The leadership and management of this subject are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

94. Standards in history at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with those expected and pupils achieve satisfactorily.
95. Teaching is satisfactory, although there was a significant proportion of unsatisfactory lessons. These lessons were characterised by a lack of detailed planning and many of the resources used were unsatisfactory; often too small to see or were not used to the best effect. Although pupils made reasonable gains in their factual knowledge, because of the weak matching of work to pupils' abilities few were motivated to be as productive as they could be.
96. However, in the majority of lessons teaching was satisfactory and pupils made the expected gains in their learning; this helps to compensate for instances of unsatisfactory learning. Many of these lessons had good elements that included good relationships and the good deployment of staff, so there were good levels of supervision, especially for pupils with learning difficulties or those learning English as an additional language. Even though teachers' planning remained a weakness in these lessons, their good subject knowledge promoted a brisk pace of learning and a good range of interesting discussions and activities. This was evident in the lesson on the treatment of poor people in Tudor England where pupils had to use various sources of information to build up notes to support a piece of extended writing on how poor people were treated. There is satisfactory use of pupils' mathematical knowledge in their studies, for example when drawing up time lines. However, due to insufficient resources only limited use was made of ICT.

97. Although the school has recently started assessing pupils at the end of each topic, assessment is not yet fully developed and is unsatisfactory. This is because this new system is not embedded across the school and the current planning format does not encourage teachers to use this information in their planning or to prepare activities for pupils of different abilities. In addition, although pupils' books are marked regularly, pupils do not know how to improve their work because this is not included in the teachers' comments.
98. The curriculum is satisfactorily planned, although its recent reorganisation due to the school's amalgamation has meant that some topics do not have a satisfactory range of resources to support it. However, pupils' achievement is supported by the good links made between history and other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 could link the causes of diseases seen by Florence Nightingale to their work in personal, social and health education (including citizenship) on the importance of hygiene for good health. Good use is also made of the local environment to enrich pupils' learning. Pupils in Year 6 have enjoyed a visit to Apsley House where they were able to experience aspects of Victorian life. Teachers planned interesting work around this trip and as a result the pupils gained a fuller understanding of what life was like in Victorian times.
99. The leadership and management of history are unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator does not have a firm understanding of how the subject is taught in the school, especially in Years 3 to 6 because her experience is of Years 1 and 2. As a result, she does not know the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching of the subject across the whole school and therefore she cannot accurately plan for its improvement.

Geography

100. This subject was not being taught at the time of the inspection. Standards are in line with those expected in both Years 2 and 6 and, although evidence in pupils' books indicates that progress across the school is uneven, overall achievement is satisfactory. Inspection evidence indicates that sufficient time is devoted to the teaching of the whole of the geography curriculum across the school and pupils steadily develop a range of skills as they progress through the school. The scheme of work is satisfactory and provides opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge of their immediate environment and increase their understanding of the wider world. However, teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to match the work planned to the individual needs and abilities of their pupils. As a result, the needs of the more able pupils are not always met. Due to a lack of resources ICT is not used effectively to support pupils' learning, although pupils have opportunities to develop their writing and mathematical skills when writing about what they have learned and drawing tables to show information. Leadership and management of geography are unsatisfactory as the co-ordinator does not have an accurate understanding of how geography is being taught or assessed in all parts of the school as her own experiences relate to Years 1 and 2 and not Years 3 to 6. As a result she is unable to clearly identify areas or priorities for development and plan for improvement.

Religious education

101. As this is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic school **religious education** was not inspected

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

102. No overall judgements on the quality of provision were made about art and design, design and technology or music. In **design and technology** no lessons were observed. A very limited amount of work was available for examination so that there was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about provision. Discussions with a group of Year 6 pupils indicate that many aspects of the subject are not fully covered in the school's scheme of work.
103. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about provision for **music**. Two part-time specialist teachers teach the subject. This supports pupils' achievement well and enriches the

curriculum and the life of the school. A hymn practice for pupils in Years 3 to 6 indicated average standards of singing; the weak articulation of words and an occasional tendency to shout spoilt otherwise accurately pitched singing. There are good extra opportunities for music making. Around two dozen pupils are taught to play the flute. The cost of this tuition is kept very low so that no pupil is prevented from learning because of an inability to pay. Pupils also learn to play recorders and guitars, free of charge. The standard of recorder playing is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to perform, ranging from school concerts and church masses to participation in the annual Hackney Festival of Voices.

104. The work on display for **art and design** in classrooms and corridors indicates that, although progress across the school is uneven, pupils achieve satisfactorily overall and standards are in line with those expected in both Years 2 and 6. Pupils develop skills well in observational and three-dimensional work, but their imaginative skills are less well promoted. At times pupils are taught a specific skill as, for example, in Year 5's work in pastels, but this practice is not consistent across the school and this slows pupils' learning. The use of pupils' sketchbooks is inconsistent across the school. After a very promising start in Year 1, their use to collect visual information as a source of ideas for future work or to practise techniques is not continued through the Year 3 to 6 classes. The subject is led well. The experienced co-ordinator works hard to ensure that the subject retains an important place in the overall programme. She is aware of the need to improve the progressive development of skills. She has improved the breadth of the curriculum by organising visits and special events and by enhancing multi-cultural aspects of the subject. Management of art and design is satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and assessment are largely informal and do not provide sufficient information to promote pupils' achievements or to adequately inform the management of the subject.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Occasionally good teaching supports good achievement and high standards in dance.
- A commercially produced scheme is not being well used.
- Good resources and accommodation support the curriculum well.
- Good leadership has brought about significant change.

Commentary

105. Pupils' skills, as in the case of games skills at the end of Year 2, are in line with those expected and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The very good teaching at the end of Year 6 significantly boosts pupils' achievement and the quality of dance observed during the inspection was above that normally seen.
106. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, but it ranges from very good to poor, with some of the weakest teaching being in Years 1 and 2. In those lessons that were good or better the teacher's own subject knowledge supported the brisk, energetic and engaging way that the lessons were delivered. Because of this, pupils persevered both physically and in their attempts to work as a team. In the best lesson in Year 6, time was given for pupils to evaluate and improve their work so that the sequence of interdependent balances that each group developed as part of a larger dance based on the rainforest were well co-ordinated and imaginative. Of particular note was the very good support given to pupils with learning difficulties so that they were fully involved in the activity. Good use was also made of the good-sized hall for dance and movement and both athletics and games skills were practised on the two hard surfaced playing areas. The recent purchase of additional resources from a grant secured by the co-ordinator has ensured that there is a good range of resources and again these were often used well to support pupils' achievement and interest.

107. Most of the satisfactory lessons had a steady pace and were built on pupils' previous learning, as in the hockey lesson in Year 2. Because pupils were given the opportunity to practise, most made steady gains in developing their skills of dribbling and passing a ball. However, there was insufficient teaching of specific skills to enable pupils to improve at a faster rate. Similarly, there were few opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work or that of others as a way of improving their techniques. The lack of learning in the weakest of lessons was due to unsatisfactory planning. Teachers failed to adapt the commercially produced scheme to the needs and aptitudes of the pupils or the time available to them; the commercially produced scheme provided lesson plans for an hour, although in Years 1 and 2 lessons were as short as 30 minutes. Because of this, the lessons became rushed with unclear instructions, insufficient time to teach specific skills or for pupils to evaluate and improve upon their work. Pupils became inattentive; time was wasted in dealing with behaviour difficulties with the result that some pupils had very little exercise or opportunity to use the apparatus.
108. The co-ordination of physical education is good. After the amalgamation of the two schools physical education was identified as a focus because it was seen as a subject that appealed to the interest and aptitudes of the pupils. In an attempt to raise the subject's profile and improve the progressive development of skills in all aspects of the curriculum across the whole school, a commercially produced scheme of work was bought. The co-ordinator was also instrumental in securing additional funding to buy new equipment and pay for specialist coaching in football and netball. These features help support pupils' achievement and staff training has also been provided to develop staff confidence and expertise and to introduce them into the new scheme of work. However, this has not yet brought about the desired improvement in spite of the co-ordinator monitoring the quality of teaching and providing good feedback because of a lack of time and the number of other priorities for development facing the school. Although there are a limited number of sports clubs, there are numerous sporting events that the school takes part in. For example, those in athletics have enabled pupils to demonstrate their skill in this area by coming second in a local competition.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

109. As only three lessons were seen in this area of the school's work, no judgement can be made about overall provision. The school sees pupils' personal development as an important part of its work and this is reflected well in its ethos. The plans for personal, social and health education are new and to date do not yet cover every year group. The school is planning to extend this planned programme for Years 3 to 6 to cover the rest of the school. The current set of plans are satisfactory and include work on diet, health and hygiene, developing good relationships, dealing with strong emotions, sex, drugs and personal safety. They also promote good links with other subjects such as history and geography. In some lessons teachers relied too heavily on these termly and half termly term plans rather than detailed lesson plans and this resulted in a lack of focus on personal, social and health issues. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is new to the post but she has raised the profile of the subject by drawing up curriculum plans, buying resources and identifying areas for development including establishing an effective School Council. This group of pupils is becoming active in promoting initiatives that include fundraising activities to increase the number of school trips.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	2
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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

