

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JULIE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Eccleston, St Helens, Merseyside

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104819

Headteacher: Mr P. Martin

Lead inspector: Mr S. Hill

Dates of inspection: 24th to 27th May 2004

Inspection number: 257766

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	251
School address:	Brooklands Eccleston St Helens Merseyside
Postcode:	WA10 5HG
Telephone number:	01744 25032
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend T. Neylon
Date of previous inspection:	15 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school caters for 251 full-time pupils in eight classes. Classes for older pupils are large. Most pupils come from the Parish of St Julie. Almost all are from Catholic families. Pupils' social circumstances are generally much better than average and very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. Pupils' attainment when they start school varies from year to year, but is generally above average. No pupils are at early stages of speaking English. Most pupils are of white British origin, with about 5 per cent coming from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. Relatively few pupils have special educational needs, and two have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The pupils with the most significant levels of need have dyslexia, physical needs or social and emotional difficulties. Few pupils start at the school other than in reception or leave other than at the end of Year 6.

As well as the usual primary school curriculum, the school teaches Spanish and French to older pupils. The school has received a number of awards in the last few years, including three School Achievement Awards, Investors in People, Healthy Schools and a Silver Activemark in recognition of the school's provision for physical education.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21277	Steve Hill	Lead inspector	English, art and design, design and technology, physical education, modern foreign languages
9348	Mary Le Mage	Lay inspector	
19120	Derek Pattinson	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, geography, history
15015	Mike Wehrmeyer	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, information and communication technology, citizenship, music

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school that provides an impressive all-round education in a happy, thriving Catholic community. Relationships are excellent. Standards are high because of very good teaching. Pupils have very positive attitudes and really enjoy the exciting and broad curriculum provided. Very good leadership and good management ensure that the school gives **very good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is very good and results in high standards.
- The curriculum is very good and arrangements for its enrichment are excellent.
- Pupils behave very well, enjoy learning and form excellent relationships with each other and with adults.
- The headteacher, governors and key staff provide very good leadership to a committed team.
- Management is good, but there is need for more consistency and precision in arrangements for co-ordinators to check up on standards and teaching in their subjects.
- Pupils are cared for very well and staff work hard to provide for pupils' needs.
- Assessment procedures are good but the setting and use of targets for individual pupils needs to be improved.

Improvement since the last inspection has been **good**. High standards have been maintained and teaching has improved. The key issues have been dealt with well. Standards and provision in information and communication technology (ICT) have risen considerably. Pupils have much better opportunities to show initiative. Reports to parents are much better. Provision to learn about a wide range of cultures is much improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is very good. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and nearly all meet the early learning goals (the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception) by the time they get to Year 1. Some will exceed these levels. Results of national assessments at the ages of seven and eleven have been consistently well above average for several years. In many instances they are in the top 5 per cent nationally. In comparison with similar schools, overall results have also been well above average for three years.

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

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

A means the results were in the top 5 per cent nationally*

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

Inspection evidence supports this positive picture. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and very well in Years 3 to 6. Current standards at ages seven and eleven are good in ICT and very good in English, mathematics and science. Standards throughout the school are particularly high in reading and in speaking and listening. Examples of work that were seen in other subjects were almost all good or very good. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good throughout the school because of the very good provision to help them.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Attendance is very good because pupils enjoy school so much. Behaviour is very good and pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. The school's very positive ethos fulfils its mission statement very effectively. As a result, relationships are excellent and pupils have high levels of self-esteem. Pupils' have very good collaborative skills, are very independent and often show high levels of initiative.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are **very good**. The consistency of teaching is a major factor in the school's success and in pupils' achievement. Examples of very good teaching were seen from every teacher during the inspection. Teachers make lessons interesting and exciting, and generate enthusiasm from their pupils. Expectations are high of work and behaviour, and pupils are keen to fulfil them because they like and respect their teachers. Assessment procedures are good and teachers make good use of data in planning work for their classes. However, there is a need for clearer targets for individual pupils to help teachers plan work more precisely and to give pupils a clear view of how they can improve. The very good curriculum is supported by excellent arrangements for enrichment and teachers make very good use of cross-curricular links between different subjects to make learning more meaningful to pupils. Support staff make a great contribution to helping pupils to learn, particularly those with special educational needs. The school's partnership with parents is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is very good. Leadership is very good and leaders provide very good role models to colleagues and to pupils. The excellent clarity of vision and high aspirations of the headteacher underpin the work of a very good team who are dedicated to providing the best possible education to the pupils. Governance is very good and governors take a very significant part in determining the school's direction. All statutory requirements are met. Management is good. It has many strengths, including very good financial planning and excellent arrangements for performance management. However, the systems for subject co-ordinators to check on standards and teaching throughout the school are not detailed or consistent enough.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and take a pride in their achievements. They appreciate the wide range of exciting things they get to do and the help and support they get from their teachers. Parents have very positive views of the school. They particularly appreciate the quality of teaching, the school's contribution to their children's academic and personal development and the school's leadership and management. They feel very comfortable about approaching the school with any concerns and are confident any worries will be addressed well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- give co-ordinators more systematic opportunities to check up on standards and teaching in the different classes, so they can refine the support they provide to colleagues;
- set clear targets for individual pupils which can be used by teachers to set work at exactly the right level and will give pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve very well and standards are high. Achievement is good in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Achievement is very good in Years 3 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently high scores in national assessments result from high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Standards have improved in ICT and are now good throughout the school.
- High standards of reading, speaking and listening strongly support pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of poetry.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
- Pupils achieve good standards across the whole curriculum.

Commentary

1. When children start at the school their attainment covers a wide range but is generally better than average, although this varies from year to year. They achieve well and almost all attain the early learning goals in all areas before the end of the reception year. They achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development.
2. As can be seen in the tables below, pupils consistently attain high standards in national assessments in Years 2 and 6. Inspection evidence confirms this picture, with pupils attaining high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards are particularly high throughout the school in reading, speaking and listening.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	19.1 (18.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	17.2 (17.3)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	18.5 (18.9)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 36 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.9 (30.8)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	31.1 (29.9)	26.8 (26.7)
science	32.0 (31.3)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 35 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Pupils are enthusiastic and competent readers. They use their skills to undertake research effectively using both books and ICT sources. They use information books competently and find information quickly. This strongly supports their learning in a range of subjects. By the end of the school they are very competent writers and show particular skills in writing poetry. Pupils in Year 6 draw on their understanding of a range of forms and conventions to write their own poetry of high quality.

4. High standards in speaking and listening also support pupils' learning well. They listen carefully and respectfully to each other and to adults. In discussion they contribute ideas confidently and express their views clearly. They use these skills very effectively when working collaboratively, in mathematics lessons for example, and this also helps develop their social skills. They participate very effectively in role-play exercises, which greatly helps their understanding of people's feelings and motives, for example when studying the Blitz in history lessons.
5. Standards are also consistently good in ICT. This is a major improvement since the last inspection, brought about by improved equipment, good teaching and very good leadership. Pupils are now very confident users of computers and other equipment and use their skills effectively to support their learning in other areas.
6. Pupils who have special educational needs make very good progress and at times achieve better than their peers because of the very good level of additional support they receive. By the time they leave, their attainment is much better than would be expected in the light of how they were doing when they started, although it still lags behind the high standards attained by other pupils in the school.
7. The high standards in the 'core' subjects of English, mathematics and science have not been achieved at the expense of other subjects. During the inspection, the standards observed in most lessons were better than those usually found. History and geography work in pupils' books was of a high standard. Standards observed in music lessons were good and were very good by the oldest class. The standards attained by pupils who are starting to learn French and Spanish are good, considering how short a time they have been learning the languages. Examples of standards above those usually found were also seen in lessons in art and design, in design and technology and in physical education.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils show **very good** attitudes to their work. Their behaviour is **very good** and is underpinned by **excellent** relationships among pupils and with adults. Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **very good**. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are **very good**.

Main strength and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes towards school and work in lessons are very good.
- Pupils are very well behaved and relationships at all levels are excellent.
- The school's measures to promote positive attitudes, behaviour and attendance are very successful.
- Pupils' personal qualities are well developed; their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Commentary

8. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy attending. School plays an important part in pupils' lives. They appreciate the range of clubs which the school provides, as well as the encouragement provided by class teachers and the challenging work in lessons. They enjoy their lessons and the very positive atmosphere during playtimes and lunchtime. In lessons, pupils' attitudes towards their work are very good because of the high quality of the learning experiences provided by teachers. As a result, pupils listen very well and show high levels of interest, concentration and determination to do well. Pupils respond particularly well when expectations are high and lesson tasks are demanding, as they were in almost all lessons seen during the inspection. Their enthusiasm for practical activities is clearly evident in science lessons. They are marginally less enthusiastic when completing worksheets.

9. Behaviour in lessons, and during lunchtimes and playtimes, is very good. Staff set high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils are very keen not to let down their teachers or themselves. The consistently very good and reliable behaviour of almost all pupils is a key element in the positive atmosphere for learning and social development that prevails. Pupils behave well in the dining hall. Bullying is rare and pupils know that, on the rare occasions such incidents occur, they are thoroughly and fairly investigated. The school very effectively places a strong emphasis on promoting caring virtues, such as through assemblies, and regularly recognises good behaviour and attitudes. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection.
10. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to their learning. Most show good levels of concentration. They maintain a very positive self-image as they are enabled to achieve success in their work. Their behaviour is mostly as good as their peers. Support teachers and assistants encourage the pupils to concentrate well and to tackle challenging tasks with determination.
11. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is at the heart of the school's work. It has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes and behaviour and on the high quality relationships established in school. Assemblies, such as that seen for pupils in Years 3 to 6 during the inspection, contribute strongly to pupils' spiritual development. Most are well planned to include a particular focus for learning, reinforce very good attitudes and have a strong moral focus, with time for prayer and reflection to reinforce the central theme. Playground 'buddies' from Year 6 support younger pupils at lunchtime and playtimes if needed and are successful in helping to eliminate anti-social behaviour and reinforcing the very caring atmosphere that permeates the school. A school council is established to give pupils greater ownership in their school, but is still at an early stage of development.
12. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to be independent, to share and to listen to one another. Lessons higher up the school provide many good opportunities for pupils to co-operate and collaborate in groups and to learn how their behaviour impacts on others. Tasks teachers set give pupils good opportunities to develop initiative, which was a relative weakness at the time of the last inspection. The very good provision for pupils' cultural development helps them to gain an understanding of their own cultural heritage. For example, Year 6 pupils in history listened to music, sang songs, studied literature and ate food, such as Lancashire Hot Pot, which were popular during the Second World War. A recent very successful multi-cultural week combined with good quality displays provides evidence of the high profile given to developing pupils' awareness of other cultures and faiths.
13. Personal development is promoted effectively throughout the personal, social, health and citizenship education curriculum (PHSCE) and reinforced in assemblies. Effective use is made of 'Circle Time' when pupils have good opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas about different issues. These lessons help pupils to develop and share their own opinions and views and promote speaking and listening. Pupils support a range of local and national charities and this helps them develop empathy with others. Parents are very happy that the school is helping their children to develop in a mature and responsible manner.
14. Very harmonious relationships among pupils, irrespective of background or gender, are a very positive feature and a clear strength of the school. Teachers value pupils' work and effectively praise effort and achievement and this significantly assists their learning.
15. Underpinning the very good levels of attendance is the relationship between the school and parents, who are fully aware of the need for very good attendance and try their utmost to support the school with this. The school provides a supportive, happy environment combined with interesting things for pupils to do. This is fundamental to the success of the school and results in pupils wanting to attend.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	3.2
National data:	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.0
National data:	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **very good**. Very good teaching ensures that the very good curriculum is implemented extremely effectively. The enrichment of the curriculum is excellent. Provision to care for pupils and links with parents, the community and other schools are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good**. The quality is consistent throughout the school and, during the inspection, examples of very good teaching were observed from every teacher. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers prepare interesting and exciting lessons, which lead to enthusiasm and hard work from pupils.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and effort are a result of the excellent relationships with staff.
- Teachers' planning is very good and makes highly effective links between different subjects.
- High quality teaching of speaking and listening contributes to very good learning across the curriculum.
- Support staff make very effective contributions to pupils' learning.
- Assessment is used well to plan work matched to pupils' needs, but this is not shared enough with pupils to give them a good understanding of their own learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 45 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (4%)	24 (53%)	17 (38%)	2 (4%)	0	0	0

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

16. Teachers are very good at planning lessons which are interesting and which rise above the mundane. Good use of cross-curricular themes helps this. Teachers make very good use of a wide range of resources, practical activities and opportunities to use ICT to gain pupils' interest and to help them understand. For example, a well chosen program in a Spanish lesson enabled pupils to hear vocabulary spoken by a native speaker and gave them a chance to participate using the interactive whiteboard. The lessons in history are brought to life through role-play and through such extras as making food based on 'rationing' recipes. Geography is enhanced through lessons on orienteering in physical education, when using compasses brings the whole idea of compass bearings to life for pupils. In science, pupils get the chance to grow plants and to collect and study small animals.

17. Lessons are planned very effectively. Teachers are clear about what they intend pupils to learn and share this with pupils so they know what they are doing. They plan the many links between subjects very carefully so that they are meaningful and what pupils learn in one subject contributes to their understanding in other areas. For example, when pupils in Year 2 were taught about using information books, the book chosen was about insects. This very good lesson helped consolidate their science work on 'mini-beasts', as well as developing their literacy skills.
18. The very good behaviour and hard work of pupils in lessons contributes very well to their learning. Throughout the school, teachers establish clear expectations and routines that pupils all understand and follow. However, the major factor in pupils' high standards of behaviour is the positive relationship they have with staff. Staff treat them with respect, affection and good humour. As a result, pupils are keen to please their teachers and gain their approval through their work and behaviour. Pupils know that their opinions and contributions are valued and, as a result, they are keen to answer questions and offer suggestions. They use their initiative when needed because teachers make it clear that this is expected and valued.
19. Speaking and listening are taught very well. In a variety of subjects, teachers use good strategies to develop pupils' understanding. Often pupils are asked to share ideas with partners before contributing to the class discussion. This involves everyone and helps all pupils to clarify their ideas, as well as promoting positive relationships and good social skills. Drama and role-play are used effectively to help pupils to gain insight into different subjects. The effectiveness of this consistent good practice was exemplified when pupils in Year 6 gave an extraordinarily high quality presentation to the rest of their class. They improvised in the role of different family members during an air raid in the Blitz. Not only were they able to converse with each other in role very effectively, but also they were able to stop and explain to questioners from their classmates, still in role, what their feelings and thoughts were at different junctures.
20. In lessons throughout the curriculum the contribution of support staff to pupils' learning is very good, particularly when they give help to pupils who have special educational needs. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is very good. Teachers set appropriate tasks well matched to the pupils' abilities, but nonetheless very challenging. Close teamwork between class teachers and support assistants enables them to help pupils quietly and effectively, using the pupils' individual education plans well. Staff use assessment well to monitor the pupils' progress towards achieving their targets. The teachers identify children who are a cause for concern as early as the reception class to ensure that support is given when it matters most. When pupils go to the special teaching room they receive a fast paced programme of key basic skills. The two support teachers set high standards and the tasks given are nearly always against the clock. The pupils love this challenge and really try their best.
21. The school has well-developed assessment systems and teachers use data well to plan work for pupils which is both manageable and challenging. In lessons, they monitor pupils' progress carefully and intervene if they see that pupils are struggling, so no time is wasted through misunderstanding. They also question pupils carefully so that they know how well they understand the work and can challenge them to improve and refine their understanding. However, teachers generally do not set clear and specific targets for children and share these with them so that they know what they need to do to improve. As a result, pupils' knowledge of their own learning, while satisfactory, is not as good as it could be.

The curriculum

The breadth of curricular opportunities is **very good**. Opportunities for enrichment are **excellent**. Accommodation and resources are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The enrichment of the curriculum is excellent.

- The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is very good.
- The strong emphasis on basic skills in English and mathematics are complemented by very good links between different subjects.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils who have special educational needs, as well as those who are gifted and talented.
- The accommodation and the use of learning resources contribute very well to raising standards.
- The flexible timetabling and curriculum innovation are very valuable features.

Commentary

22. Very good curriculum leadership has enabled the school to improve its provision since the previous inspection. All subjects now have secure planning schemes that ensure consistent progression. This has resulted in improved standards in subjects like ICT. They also ensure a very good balanced coverage for the programmes of study of all subjects. All phases of planning are at a very high level, so each stage is a very good preparation for the one that follows. Teachers give a very strong emphasis to learning the basic skills in English and mathematics. As a result, high standards have been maintained. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is particularly well planned to lead children to rapid achievement of the early learning goals. It involves an innovative approach to children's involvement in selecting their own learning that promotes a good sense of independence and confidence.
23. The creation of links between subjects is a long established part of the culture of lesson planning. The links are creative and beneficial to pupils' interest and progress. For instance, Year 6 pupils studying the history of the Second World War enjoy the diversions of big band swing music and the testing of 'rationing' recipes like hotpot and carrot crunch. The staff have a wholehearted commitment to raising standards through the curriculum. Consequently, in annual reviews they identify aspects they see needing improvement.
24. As well as a very good overall balance to the broad curriculum, the school provides very good depth through an excellent programme of enrichment linked to educational visits and visitors. These bring the curriculum to life, to heighten the impact and make it relevant to pupils' interests. The school encourages as many pupils as possible to participate in the very good programme of sports and the arts. These widen pupils' experience further and help to identify gifted and talented pupils. Provision for these pupils is at an early stage, but the recent appointment of a co-ordinator and the establishment of a register and networking of contacts indicate that the school is taking this development seriously.
25. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is very good. The planning behind the provision is exemplary. The pupils' individual education plans are skilfully woven into the general lesson planning. The individual targets in the plans are usually clearly defined, focus sharply on individual needs and contribute well to pupils' progress. The co-ordinator monitors them to ensure all the plans reach the level of the best. The two support-teachers plan rigorously against the assessments they have made and keep detailed records of progress. As a result, pupils make very good progress.
26. Curriculum innovation is a strength of the school's overall provision. Timetable organisation is flexible to allow for specialist teaching based on teachers' expertise. This is working very effectively, for instance in music and ICT. Staffing levels are good. This enables teachers to split the larger classes and alternate certain subjects with teaching 'partners' to maximise facilities, such as the computer suite or musical instruments. The benefit to pupils is to be able to work one-to-one on computers and keyboards. This has a positive impact on the level of progress made. Other innovations that excite the pupils are the building of the 'Virtual Learning Environment', in which they can access schoolwork at home on computers and the plans for accelerated learning. The school is adept at gaining accreditation for its work, for instance in the Foundation Stage Kitemark of good practice or the development of a healthy schools ethos. The school is expanding its teaching of foreign languages with the support of a local secondary school.

27. The bright, attractive accommodation reflects the school's strong ethos of care and learning and encourages pupils to want to work hard. The teachers use the very wide range of resources particularly well to transfer their focus from teaching to learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school meets a **very high** standard in the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils. It provides **good** support, advice and guidance for its pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. The involvement of pupils in the work and development of the school is also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of relationships between adults and pupils is excellent, adding to the pupils' self-confidence and trust in staff.
- The school rigorously addresses all perceived areas of risk to pupils and adults at the school and ensures that all statutory checks are undertaken.
- Insufficient use is made of individual targets for pupils to enable them to be fully supported to improve their learning.
- Arrangements for pupils joining the school part way through the school year are very supportive and minimise any disruption to their learning.

Commentary

28. All through the school there are clear indications of excellent relationships between pupils and adults. Adults are patient, kind and very supportive which means pupils feel very secure and are keen to contribute their ideas in lessons. This has a very positive effect on pupils' feelings of self-worth, their attitudes to their learning and school life in general. Pupils are unanimous in saying there is at least one adult in the school they feel they can confide in. The consistent, supportive way in which the pupils are dealt with at all times underpins the quality of these relationships and is an indication of the very high standards of care across the school.
29. All statutory health and safety checks are undertaken and comprehensive risk assessments exist for all relevant areas of school life. All incidents and accidents are recorded thoroughly and parents are fully informed. Effective child protection arrangements are in place and all adults working in the school are aware of them. The school works hard to promote a healthy lifestyle to its pupils, has achieved the Active Sports Mark and is working towards the Healthy Schools Award. By ensuring that the care and welfare of pupils is given a very high priority, the school maximises the benefit pupils can gain from the educational opportunities offered.
30. The use of individual targets for pupils is not well developed. Pupils are aware that they have targets in English, but most cannot recall what they are – they only refer to them in English lessons. This means that opportunities to work towards these targets are not fully used by pupils in other subjects, for example when writing in history. In subjects other than English, they have no individual targets to focus their efforts on improvement. However, pupils say that they do get very helpful verbal advice from their teachers who help them to see how particular pieces of work could be improved. The school has identified improvements to individual targets as an area to develop.
31. There are very sensitive, supportive arrangements for pupils joining the school part way through the school year, which result in their new class mates eagerly awaiting their arrival. This has obvious benefits in minimising any disruption to the learning and progress of these pupils. Arrangements for pupils starting school for the first time are equally supportive, with school and parents working very closely to ensure very young children settle quickly into a pattern of school and home life which are mutually supportive.

32. Teachers monitor the progress of pupils who have special educational needs exceptionally well. The frequent reviews of progress are valuable occasions for staff to extend support and guidance to pupils on their work and behaviour. The school draws well on the expertise of specialist services for more detailed diagnostic testing and support. The school has very good links with the senior schools. This creates a smooth transfer to the pupils' next stage of education and enables them to settle quickly and confidently. The school's efforts are much appreciated by the pupils and this contributes well to the stable and happy feel of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established **very good** links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The information provided for parents is very good.
- The school values the views of parents and responds positively to them.
- Links with the local secondary school enhance opportunities for pupils.
- Very good links with the local community enrich the curriculum.

Commentary

33. Parents receive a wide range of high quality information and are kept very well informed about day-to-day events at school. The school holds three Open Evenings each year, when parents can discuss and review their children's progress with their teachers. In total, the information provided for parents is very good, keeping them fully informed about all aspects of school life and the progress of their children. The annual reports they receive about their children are very good. They describe, in detail, what their children have achieved. The reports also list targets for pupils to achieve, especially in English and mathematics, but these are frequently too general to be of any real value to the child or their parent. The parents of children who have special educational needs are fully involved in the procedures at each stage. The school works hard to allay their anxieties during the early stages. Staff keep them well informed about their children's progress. Parents are delighted with this aspect of the school's work.
34. Parents are very supportive of the school. They find it very open and approachable and feel valued. These views are endorsed by the inspection. Parents are consulted over policy developments in the school, frequently being involved in working parties, and are consulted over issues affecting their children, such as the implications of class sizes and school uniform. The school is also very responsive to parents who express concerns over their children and works with parents to resolve them. There is a very active Parents and Friends Association which contributes a lot to the social life of the school and raises significant funds for the school each year.
35. The school has very good links with the local Catholic secondary school. There are very good transition arrangements for Year 6 pupils. These pupils are used to visiting the secondary school to attend productions or by being involved in after-school art activities. They are taught French by a teacher from the secondary school and the recent multi-cultural week at St Julie's was enhanced by staff of the secondary school working on a dance project with the pupils. All these initiatives work towards making transition to the secondary school a less daunting prospect. Teachers from both schools liaise well on curriculum matters, especially in numeracy and literacy.
36. The local environment and people within it enrich the curriculum, especially in geography and history. Links with the parish community enhance wider aspects of school life, especially when school and parish come together as a single community. This enriches the spiritual, social and educational life of the school. The community benefits from access to the school facilities, especially the use of the ICT suite. One local business makes a significant contribution to the

development of reading in the school as several adults come into school on a regular basis to help pupils with their reading.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The governance of the school is very good. The leadership, including that from the headteacher and other key staff, is very good. The school is well managed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outstanding clarity of vision and high aspirations of the headteacher impact very positively on the leadership of other key staff.
- The governors' very good commitment to the school is helping to shape the vision for the school's future, challenging and supporting senior management.
- The headteacher's performance management programme is excellent and drives the school's commitment to rigorous self-evaluation.
- There is very good management of the Foundation Stage and of special educational needs provision.
- Very good development planning closely links finances, teachers' professional growth and the pursuit of improving standards.
- The monitoring of performance by subject leaders is not sufficiently thorough or detailed.

Commentary

37. This is a successful school. The headteacher has maintained the same high quality of leadership found in the previous inspection. His clarity of vision for the future of the school, sense of purpose and hard work are outstanding. They form the driving force that enables staff, governors and pupils to share the same high aspirations. The excellent performance management strategy is central to the school's ongoing programme of self-review. It is an open process and sets challenging targets to ensure the drive for raising standards does not lose momentum. It enables new targets and directions to be set in the school's development plan. For instance, as the staff recognise a developing strength they capitalise on it, build it up and put it forward for official accreditation. Recently the Foundation Stage gained its Kitemark of quality in this way and the sports programme its Silver Activemark. This is very good strategic planning.
38. Governance is very good. The governors know the school well. They are committed to the further success of the school, valuing excellence, fostering talent, but only on a foundation of equality of opportunity. They share the headteacher's vision of the wide curriculum, building a school that is good (or very good) at many things rather than exceptional at one. While they support the school wholeheartedly, they are prepared to take on the role of critical friend and challenge when necessary. For instance, they are concerned about the implications of the new regulations for workforce remodelling. They ask the headteacher to keep them informed of budget projections to assess and minimise any potential dislocation, to enable them to make decisions of best value for the school.
39. Financial management is very good. Spending is prudent and budget surpluses are used wisely to enable the school to achieve its educational priorities. This, too, is very good strategic planning. The current balance in the accounts has been judiciously calculated to maintain a balanced budget over the next few years, when workforce reforms and projected pupil numbers would otherwise put financial strains on the school.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	643,425
Total expenditure	633,501
Expenditure per pupil	2,517

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	37,605
Balance carried forward to the next	47,529

40. The leadership of other key staff is very good. Inspired by the headteacher's example of non-stop effort, they too are very good role models for colleagues and pupils. They create very effective and dedicated teams, for instance for music, special educational needs or in the Foundation Stage. The new deputy headteacher is a strong support to the headteacher. Sensing the spirit of the school, he is building on this in assemblies that have a sense of occasion and spirituality through music, as well as leading ICT into new realms of effectiveness. The leadership of special educational needs provision is very good. The co-ordinator has moulded a strong team with good expertise, committed to the best progress for the pupils. She has a vision of increased support for the youngest children to reduce the help needed later on. She has embarked on a programme of more specific training for the support staff in order to deploy them in an even more precise way by seeking accreditation as a 'Dyslexia Friendly School'. Management of special educational needs is very good. All aspects are running smoothly and the money allocated is very well spent. The co-ordinator's action plan rightly identifies the need to extend the computer-based resources for special educational needs tuition.
41. Management is good overall. Many of the aspects that contribute to it are strong, for instance the monitoring of data, reviewing patterns and taking effective action. The subject co-ordinators' role of monitoring teaching and standards is not consistent. This is a gap that weakens the whole. Teachers and co-ordinators monitor pupils' progress very comprehensively through a long established system of 'key learning achievements'. These do not tie in directly with the national curriculum attainment levels. Therefore co-ordinators cannot convert the standards profile easily into national curriculum terms.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision is **very good** in the Foundation Stage.

42. Children start in the reception class in September. The school organises a very good range of welcoming activities, so children soon settle. An initial period of assessing the children's aptitude gives teachers the basis for planning activities to meet their needs very precisely. The staff share the headteacher's vision of providing a stimulating and creative learning environment, retaining the rigour to raise standards while giving children continuous opportunities to follow their own interests. The adults' care and concern for the progress of the children is one of many reasons why they achieve so well. Teaching is very good. The curriculum is imaginative and planned in such a way that all children are supported and challenged. Generally the school trend for attainment on entry to reception has been above average. The current class was nearer to the average level in most areas of learning.
43. Staff monitor the children's progress continuously and are always on the watch for opportunities to move children to the next step in learning. The activities are well organised to make the most flexible use of the facilities and the curriculum has a very good balance between the more formal tuition in basic skills and the free choice structured play activities. The outdoor play area is used very well to replicate and enhance the same activities as indoors. The staff work very effectively one to one, or with small groups, and the tasks are particularly well matched to the attainment of the children. The children thrive amidst the vast array of fascinating new resources, their eyes aglow with wonder and curiosity. Towards the middle of the year the higher attaining pupils begin to link their learning timetable with Year 1. The five children currently involved enjoy their time with the older pupils and the arrangement is working well.

Personal, social and emotional development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent relationships between children and adults create an atmosphere conducive to very effective learning.
- Very good planning makes the most of opportunities for children to interact and mature.

Commentary

44. This area of learning receives a high profile and the children achieve very well. They make rapid progress and by the time they start in Year 1 most children have reached the early learning goals and many exceed them. This is due to very good teaching, excellent relationships and a well planned and ordered environment in which children quickly settle and feel secure. They adapt well to the consistent routines and this shows in the way they listen to the adults. Children are encouraged to take responsibility and are now used to this as a way of working. They are confident enough to work independently in preparation for the more formal routines in Year 1. They take turns in being monitors, for instance by helping to give out materials or taking the register to the office. All see the importance of keeping the environment neat and safe and children tidy up enthusiastically. Behaviour is very good. Because staff are skilled in knowing how young children learn, they plan an effective range of activities to develop confidence and social skills. These lead to good sharing and a growing interest and concentration, as well as a strong desire to learn. The staff monitor the progress particularly well. They maintain excellent records, which support the flow of information to parents.

Communication, language and literacy

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reading and writing are taught well.
- Every opportunity is seized upon to enhance children's communication skills.
- Occasionally opportunities are missed to extend the children's speaking skills.

Commentary

45. Teachers plan carefully to provide a structured range of activities specifically to develop children's language skills, which are average when they start school. All children achieve well and make good progress so that most reach the levels expected for their age as they start Year 1, and some exceed it. This is because of very good teaching of reading and writing. Monday mornings start with a class discussion, during which every child gets a chance to tell about the weekend's events. This becomes the focus for the day's writing task. Children learn to relish new words in exciting or humorous stories. With very good assistance from the nursery nurse, the teacher encourages the children to learn the shapes of the letters and how the sounds make words. By the end of reception the children have learned that the words they see in books have a meaning and that they can read many of them. They also learn that the marks they make on paper can become real writing and their spelling is improving all the time. The teachers develop children's learning systematically and assess their progress well. No time is wasted and staff provide challenging activities that are well matched to the needs of the children, particularly those with special educational needs. The learning is fun and highly effective. While the adults engage children in speaking throughout the day, there are some opportunities missed. For instance, during some lesson introductions children do not get enough chance to contribute their ideas in full sentences. Part of the co-ordinator's action plan addresses this issue. Some of the children's letter formation conflicts with the direction they need later when they begin to switch to cursive.

Mathematical development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching enables children to learn well through practical activities.
- Very good assessment and planning enable the teacher to match tasks very closely to children's needs, in small groups.

Commentary

46. The high quality teaching uses practical activities to help children's understanding of number and related mathematical ideas. Consequently children achieve well. Most move from an average starting point to attain the early learning goals and beyond by the time they start Year 1. This is above average. The teachers use a wide range of mathematical and play equipment to allow children to explore number, pattern and shape. Children learn to count in small groups, where adults can give continuous close attention. This enables children to consolidate their learning well and apply it in their exploration around the classroom. The teachers create good learning conditions, for instance the range of unusual materials available for children to trace their numbers to get the feel of the shape. They encourage children to use correct mathematical terms. Skilled questioning helps children develop their own thinking, curiosity and confidence in risking answers. The teachers use precise assessment well. This means they can move the children on at the peak of their understanding. By the end of reception most children are recording simple addition and subtraction sums to twenty and filling in missing numbers on a number line, using their knowledge, for example, that six is one more than five.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching provides children with numerous opportunities to learn about the world around them and achieve well.
- The staff provide a great variety of resources, visits and visitors to enrich the learning.
- Children use the computer well throughout the day.

Commentary

47. Very good teaching and learning enables children to make good progress. Children enter reception at an average level. They achieve well and reach beyond the early learning goals by the end of the year. This is above average. Children take regular turns on the computer and their skills are developing steadily. Teachers use the 'big book' resources and photographs very well to help children to understand growth and the passage of time. They take the children around the school, outside the school and to places further afield. In this way children acquire the language of geography, moving and turning, left and right, near and far. At present, for science, they are closely observing the growth of a wide range of plants in the classroom and outside in the pleasant play area. A wide range of visitors to the classroom enriches the children's experience further and they delight in asking questions. The teachers also use questioning well to help children to learn how simple instructions and recipes lead to success in making lemon crunch biscuits or sunflowers. Children love these activities, listen very well and concentrate hard on what they are doing. Their behaviour is consistently good. Their sense of curiosity is strong and they observe closely. The teachers assess the children's progress well with precise records to hand on to the Year 1 teachers.

Physical development

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching provides children with many opportunities to develop co-ordination and experience outdoor play.
- The children's skills in adventurous play are above average.
- The children's co-ordination and control of small items starts at a lower level, but through very good teaching is brought up to the average level.

Commentary

48. Children start the reception class with above average skills in running, jumping and climbing and play on large equipment, such as tricycles and wheeled vehicles. Very good teaching develops these skills so that by the end of the year they are well above average. The teachers use the colourful new outdoor play area well to enable the children to explore vigorous movement and enjoy climbing and balancing on the large equipment. This aids their confidence and physical development considerably. The teachers carefully track the children's progress through the stepping stones to learning and adjust the activities accordingly. In activities in the hall, for instance, children display the confidence and awareness of space equal to Level 1 of the National Curriculum.

49. The fine finger control needed for handling small items, such as holding pencils, brushes and other small objects, is not as well developed when children start school. Consequently, teachers provide a very large number of opportunities for children to handle a wide range of items that improve finger and grip control. This leads naturally to the care in accurate formation of letters and numbers. Many painting and model-making sessions enable children to practice and refine. The control of the computer mouse also focuses their precision. By the end of reception, the children's grip control skills are brought up to the level expected for their age. The

children who have special educational needs benefit particularly from these activities, where they can experience success.

Creative development

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good direct teaching of skills is combined with very good opportunities to learn through structured play.
- Children chose independently from an exciting range of activities.

Commentary

50. Most children start the reception year with an average level of creativity. The staff have enjoyed planning a wide range of stimulating and fun activities to enable the children to build further on these talents. The art corner is a busy studio where children explore colour mixing, learn close observation skills and a variety of techniques. Much valuable support is given by the adult helpers, who encourage the children particularly well, having established such good relationships with them. There is a wealth of opportunities for imaginative play in the 'Post Office' and other role play situations. These are particularly valuable for pupils who have special educational needs as they identify more closely with the imaginative world. Teachers provide lively music and dance sessions that extend the children's vocabulary as well as skills. Their play extends their creative ideas and develops their spoken language. With this input carefully planned and assessed, the children make good progress and achieve well to reach beyond the early learning goals at the end of reception. Children display lively imaginations and a well-developed, confident approach to creative situations.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high, particularly in speaking and listening, because of very good teaching.
- Poetry is very well taught.
- Cross-curricular links with other subjects are very effective.
- The subject is well organised.

Commentary

51. Standards are high in all aspects of the subject. This is reflected in the results of national assessments over several years. Results overall have been well above average in each of the last four years and in most years have been in the top 5 per cent nationally. Results in comparison to similar schools have also been well above average in most years. Results in reading have been particularly strong. In all aspects of the subject, almost all pupils get to the expected levels and high numbers are achieving significantly better than the national expectation.
52. Reading skills are very good. By the end of Year 2, almost all pupils are fluent readers, tackling fiction and non-fiction with competence. They understand the plots of the stories they read and explain them clearly. Their phonic skills are very good and they use them confidently to tackle new words such as 'cirrus' or 'cumulonimbus'. They understand terms such as 'author' and 'illustrator'. By the oldest class, they have a good understanding of genre and have clear likes and dislikes. They know how to use the library, and use information books very effectively, using the index to find specific items, read silently to research particular points and recount accurately what they have found out.
53. Pupils write fluently and, although they are slow to join their handwriting in the younger classes, they do so very confidently by the end of the school. Their spelling and punctuation skills are high throughout the school and they express their ideas fluently, imaginatively and individually. They show particularly good skills and understanding in their work on poetry. By Year 2, pupils are confidently using different structures and devices, such as acrostics, limericks and alliteration to compose their poems. By Year 6, they understand and use a wide range of stylistic devices and forms. For example, when writing about air raids, they were told they could choose the form to use. They confidently and independently made their decisions and used a wide range of structures including 'stream of consciousness', straightforward accounts, diary form and several kinds of poetry including kenning, rhyming couplets and a shape-poem, drawing on their extensive knowledge. Overall the work produced was of an excellent standard.
54. Pupils' achievement is very good because of the very good teaching. In lessons observed, all teaching and learning was at least good and in three-quarters of lessons it was very good. Classroom management is very good and is firmly based on positive relationships and well-established routines. Teachers give pupils lots of chances to use their initiative and they respond positively. Pupils are thoroughly engaged in their lessons because teachers work hard to make them interesting and exciting. A wide range of resources and interesting texts are used to enthuse pupils. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make very good links with other curriculum areas, so pupils can see the relevance of what they are taught. Lessons are well structured so pupils can build on what they already know. Expectations are very high, but pupils who struggle are given extra help when needed, so that all can succeed.

55. The consistent use of structured opportunities to develop speaking and listening is a major strength and leads to high standards. Teachers enliven lessons with discussion in pairs or groups and with role play or 'hot-seating'. Pupils thoroughly enjoy such sessions, show high levels of empathy and some show an amazing ability to get 'in character'.
56. The subject is well organised and is very well led by two co-ordinators who work together well. Colleagues are given a clear lead and good practice, such as the effective use of drama and cross-curricular links, are promoted effectively and consistently across the school. There is good analysis of performance data and robust action taken to address any issues found. A slight weakness apparent in boys' writing in last year's assessments has been tackled very effectively. Boys currently in Year 6 are writing to a high standard. However, the co-ordinators lack structured and regular opportunities to check up on teaching and learning in their colleagues' classes. This has been identified as a point for development, so that the co-ordinators' advice can be targeted even more effectively to help raise standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. This is a significant strength. Pupils' very good skills in speaking and listening are used to help their learning throughout the curriculum. Structured opportunities for discussion, and for drama and role-play, help extend pupils' understanding, for example, of people's motives in history lessons. In a physical education lesson, pupils in Year 4 were able to organise themselves to practice athletics skills very effectively through discussion. The consistent use of such skills also supports excellent relationships and pupils' very good social skills. High levels of skill in reading mean that pupils can research information easily and confidently, both from books and from ICT sources. Their fluent writing skills are used well, for example in history and geography, where they are able to show their good understanding and explain their thinking clearly in their writing, in a variety of styles.

Modern foreign languages

58. Pupils are starting to learn Spanish in Year 4 and French in Years 5 and 6. Pupils in Year 6 have also had a few 'taster' lessons in German as a part of the many cross-curricular links in their current history project on the Second World War. Although it is not possible to make secure judgements about overall provision in these three subjects, it is clear they are providing a very good extension to the curriculum. The quality of the lessons seen was high. One lesson was seen in each of German, Spanish and French. Teaching and learning in all three were very good. The lesson in French was taught by an 'advanced skills teacher' from the local high school. As well as contributing to pupils' learning, she has also been passing on her expertise to teachers at St Julie's. The Spanish and German lessons were taught by a teacher in the school who also has specialist subject knowledge. Pupils are achieving well in all three subjects and show good standards in the light of how short a time they have been learning. There is a good balance between reading, speaking and listening, with some opportunities for writing, which take advantage of pupils' fluent writing skills in English. Teaching is lively and enthusiastic and lessons are fast paced with a lot of opportunities for pupils to join in. Pupils are enthusiastic and try hard to learn new words and to pronounce them accurately, following the good model provided by the teachers. Good use is made of a wide range of resources, including ICT in the Spanish lesson seen.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above national levels at the end of Years 2 and 6 and most pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with very good teaching seen across the school.

- Leadership is good, but monitoring requires development to help drive standards up even further.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve further.
- There are significant other strengths, which help explain the high standards.
- The development of mathematical skills is given increasingly high profile in other subjects.

Commentary

59. Standards in mathematics are above average when pupils start Year 1. Pupils' achievements are good overall as they move through Years 1 to 6 and some pupils make very good progress in Years 5 and 6. This is because the subject is well represented within the school's very good curriculum, teaching is good and often very good, with teachers giving good emphasis on the development of mathematical understanding, and pupils show good and often very good attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils reach standards which are well above national levels by the end of Years 2 and 6. This is confirmed by results of national assessments, which have been consistently well above average over several years. The school has maintained and improved on the high standards seen at the last inspection, particularly in terms of the increased numbers who exceed the expected levels in national assessments. However, a small number of more able pupils in Year 2 do not make the best possible progress because work is not always matched to their precise needs. For example, in number, there is some unnecessary consolidation of work which pupils already understand before they move on to work that challenges them.
60. Teaching varies between satisfactory and excellent, but is good overall, with very good teaching seen across the age groups. One Year 6 lesson seen during the inspection, which involved pupils in a variety of mathematical challenges connected to the 'Euro 2000' football tournament, was excellent. In this lesson the teacher had very high expectations and pitched work at appropriately challenging levels, maintained a brisk pace throughout and asked purposeful questions to develop clear understanding of new knowledge. High levels of enthusiasm from the teacher, excellent relationships and very secure subject knowledge helped to keep pupils motivated and involved. As a result of these many strengths, pupils made significant strides in their learning. These very strong features, many of which were seen in other lessons, help to explain the very good attitudes to learning and high standards of behaviour seen during the inspection. In one lesson judged satisfactory, time was not used to best effect to benefit pupils and more able pupils were not challenged enough. Occasionally, teachers do not make enough use of real life mathematical experiences to help pupils appreciate the importance of number in our daily lives.
61. The subject is well led and there are clear plans for its continued development. Data from national tests is rigorously analysed to ensure that weaknesses are identified and overcome. However, the monitoring of lessons and pupils' work is not regular or systematic enough to establish what works well and what needs doing to help raise standards even further. For example, there are inconsistencies of practice in how mental tests and jotters are used, which need attention.
62. Pupils do not have targets to help them develop ownership in their learning and as a result many are unclear of what they need to do next to help them improve. Some teachers do not always evaluate with pupils near the end of a lesson how well lesson targets have been achieved. This prevents them from building carefully next time on what has been learnt.
63. There is a clear framework for developing knowledge, skills and understanding as pupils move through the school. Teachers maintain informative records to help them identify what pupils know and understand and what requires attention. They mark pupils' work carefully and conscientiously and this is helping pupils to make good progress. Teachers are rightly placing increasing emphasis on providing opportunities to develop pupils' reasoning skills, initiative and understanding through investigative and problem solving activities, which is helping to bring the subject alive for them and facilitate learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. The development of mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding through other subjects is given high profile. For example, younger pupils use a computer program to help them compile a database while Year 5 pupils use ICT to help them compare temperatures in Moscow and London as part of their geography work.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above national levels by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Teaching is consistently good, with very good teaching seen in Years 3 to 6.
- The skills of scientific enquiry are given very good emphasis.
- Subject leadership is good.
- Other important strengths help to explain the good gains in learning that pupils make.
- Links with other subjects are good and are continuing to develop.

Commentary

65. Pupils make consistently good gains in learning as they move through the school. This is because the teaching is of high quality with investigative skills given very strong emphasis. The subject is high profile, the leadership is good and regular checks are made of what pupils know and understand. As a result, standards are well above national levels by the end of Years 2 and 6. This is confirmed by the results of national assessments over several years.
66. Teaching and learning are at least good and often very good. Both lessons seen in older classes were very good, with both lessons observed in younger classes good. In all lessons seen, strengths significantly outweighed points for development. Good teaching in science is embedded in the school's practice due to the high quality leadership provided over many years. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and they place very strong emphasis on developing scientific understanding. Their enthusiastic approach and carefully chosen resources to support learning ensure that all pupils are interested and involved. Their high expectations ensure very good levels of challenge for pupils. These strong features, combined with the brisk pace of lessons, the frequent use of good quality questioning and the regular use of encouragement and praise to enhance self-esteem, help ensure that pupils make at least good and often very good progress. Many of these features were seen in a Year 5 lesson in which pupils were using their knowledge of how light travels to solve a scientific challenge. However, pupils are very occasionally required to copy how they carry out investigations rather than use their own language and colour in diagrams to enhance their appearance, which do not contribute to the development of scientific understanding.
67. The skills of enquiry, such as predicting, investigating, testing, recording, evaluating and drawing conclusions as part of carefully structured scientific investigations, are given strong emphasis as a means of developing understanding, for example when Year 6 pupils design, make and test paper aeroplanes. This is a very strong feature of science provision, as it was at the time of the last inspection, and helps account for the high standards and explains why pupils thoroughly enjoy science.
68. The subject is well led. Leadership is currently in the hands of a very good newly qualified teacher who is being trained to assume responsibility as science co-ordinator. At present, she is ably supported by the headteacher, who is determined to ensure that science remains high profile after the previous high quality leadership. For example, there are clear plans for the subject's continued development. Data from national tests is rigorously analysed, weaknesses identified and overcome. Resources have recently been audited to ensure that all know what is available. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning and pupils' work is still not regular enough to give pupils the best possible opportunities to succeed.

69. Other strengths help explain the subject's high profile, which leads to high standards. Visits and visitors substantially aid learning and bring the subject to life, such as when younger pupils visit Sankey Valley to study a variety of animals and plants. Classroom displays help to interest and involve pupils, acquire a scientific vocabulary and celebrate their achievements. Teachers regularly give pupils science homework, which helps to consolidate learning. Their marking of pupils' work often indicates what they need to do next in order to improve, but pupils do not yet have targets to aid learning. Links with other subjects feature strongly in science. For example, in links with mathematics and ICT, Year 6 pupils present their findings in an investigation about insulation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and resourcing have brought about much improved provision.
- Standards are above those expected and pupils' achievement is now good.
- Good medium term planning ensures consistent progress.
- Very good training and support has given staff confidence to use the computer suite more and attempt a range of innovations.
- Assessment systems are not guiding teachers' planning of targets for higher attaining pupils.

Commentary

70. Standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above those expected for the pupils' age. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The pupils' work folders show that they make good progress in acquiring a wide range of skills and knowledge. This is a good achievement as some pupils have had inconsistent access and tuition. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported in lessons to enable them to make good progress.
71. Teaching is good. Teachers have clear objectives for lessons and give clear instructions. The teachers use the planning scheme to build learning skills gradually but consistently. Learning is good because pupils are able to improve their skills by trial and error in a hands-on situation. The teaching of older pupils is very good and teachers set particularly challenging tasks in Years 5 and 6. These tasks make pupils think and involve them in making decisions and choices. They have a very positive attitude to computer work. Relationships are excellent and pupils often help each other out. When working in pairs, pupils collaborate very effectively. The organisation of the timetable to allow the largest classes to send one half at a time works well because these smaller groups can work one-to-one on the machines. Teachers assess pupils' progress well on a system of key learning achievements. These are not fully linked to National Curriculum criteria, so they are not guiding some teachers' planning for setting more challenging targets for the higher attaining groups.
72. Leadership is very good. The co-ordinator has encouraged staff to build on their earlier training to tackle more ambitious projects. His audit of the subject indicated the need to upgrade facilities for the younger pupils and replace the ageing classroom computers throughout the school. The subject action plan includes the extension of the Virtual Learning Environment jointly with the local education authority. This is a very popular initiative with pupils, who like the homework links with school. A few said they foresee a time when they do not need to get out of bed! Access to the system is still quite awkward, but Year 3 pupils are patiently persevering with their training.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. The pupils' work folders contain a reasonable range of applications used in computer lessons. For instance, word-processing and more advanced presentation skills are frequently used in

English, while spreadsheets and databases extend pupils' mathematical and logical thinking well. Internet research is frequently used for history projects. Year 6, for instance, is learning how to transfer text and graphics from the Internet, through the school website, into their own hard disk folders. Not all subjects are represented. The co-ordinator is concerned to address this because it limits the cross-curricular links available, which are very good otherwise. The resources for this are due to be upgraded, particularly the classroom computers, so that the opportunity for continuous access will encourage more effective use in lessons.

HUMANITIES

74. Religious education in this school is inspected by the Diocese of Liverpool and is reported upon separately.
75. History and geography were not included in the main focus of the inspection. Inspectors saw a small number lessons, some examples of pupils' work and held discussions with pupils. Standards observed are high in geography by the end of Year 2 and in history by the end of Years 2 and 6. There are good links between subjects to promote learning. Visits, visitors and local study work help to bring both subjects to life for pupils and promote important skills. Teaching and learning seen were at least good and sometimes very good.
76. Pupils made good progress in the lessons seen. In geography, Year 2 pupils drew simple maps of the immediate area, identified types of houses in Brooklands Road and made comparisons between Eccleston and a village in India. This work was of a good standard. In history, pupils in Year 2 used historical sources effectively to identify similarities and differences between seaside holidays over one hundred years ago with those of today. By the end of Year 6, pupils have detailed knowledge and understanding of life in Britain during the Second World War. Both subjects are well represented in the school's very good curriculum. There are good links with other subjects, including with literacy and information technology, which aid learning. For example, in history Year 3 pupils research work about the Romans using ICT, while Year 6 pupils complete work based on 'Carrie's War'.
77. The development of key skills is given good emphasis through local fieldwork, visits, visitors and the use of artefacts in high quality classroom displays, such as seen in Year 6 to give pupils empathy with the spirit of the Blitz in wartime Britain.
78. Strengths in teaching seen during the inspection include the excellent relationships forged with pupils, which help to underpin learning, secure subject knowledge shown by teachers and the good questioning of pupils who are given much encouragement to succeed. All teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and, as a result, pupils achieve well.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

79. Except for music, these subjects were sampled and it is not possible to give secure judgements about overall provision. Two lessons were observed in physical education and also clubs for dance and netball. One lesson was seen in art and design and work on display and in books examined. Three lessons were observed in design and technology and samples of pupils' written work and things they had made were examined. Most of the work seen was of a good standard and some examples were very good.
80. In **art and design**, standards in the lesson seen in Year 6 were good. Pupils made clay figures based on the work of Henry Moore, linked to their studies in history. The lesson was very effective because pupils were given clear instructions in specific techniques and a chance to experiment with a material with which they had little familiarity and because of their own very positive attitudes and good collaborative skills. Work on display around the school was of a good quality. It covered a wide range and showed a good understanding of art and artists from a range of times and places. Work on the Chinese New Year and on Mendhi reflected the good attention the school gives to a variety of cultures. Of exceptional quality was work based on

Seurat's technique in the younger classes. These finger paintings of sea and water were astonishingly effective, with a subtle use of colour and were very carefully executed. They are typical of work normally done by pupils several years older.

81. In **design and technology**, the evaluation and design aspects of the subject are done well and work seen was of a good quality. Pupils are given good structures on which to base their planning and develop these aspects of the subject well as they get older, with the individuality of their designs, and the careful evaluation of how they could be better, improving as they get older. Examples of finished products seen were generally of a satisfactory quality. In lessons observed, teaching was good in two lessons in the juniors and was very good in a lesson in the infants.
82. In **physical education**, good standards and teaching were observed in athletics in Year 4 and very good teaching and standards were seen in a Year 2 games lesson. Teaching is enthusiastic and well organised and pupils respond positively, try hard and behave very well. In the games lesson, very clear teaching of specific skills, a wide range of equipment and high expectations contributed to pupils' high levels of achievement. In the lesson with Year 4, some pupils worked with the teacher on orienteering skills. They made good progress because of clear instructions, using a carefully prepared worksheet. The rest of the class organised themselves to practise running and throwing. This part of the lesson had been planned to be organised by a student teacher, who was off ill on the day. The pupils rose magnificently to the challenge, organising themselves to measure their throws and to work in pairs timing themselves on the running track. Their behaviour, relationships and organisational skills were excellent and they made good progress, despite little adult intervention, building on the routines and systems which had clearly been established in previous lessons. Sports clubs are well attended and contribute well to pupils' standards.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good long and medium term planning ensures consistent progress.
- Very good teaching produces high standards.
- Very good resources are used well to underpin pupils' experience.
- Equal opportunity for all pupils to access basic skills creates a strong foundation.

Commentary

83. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above those expected. Standards at the end of Year 6 are well above the expected level. Provision has improved even on the high level found at the previous inspection because teachers now use a consistent planning system linked closely to attainment levels of Curriculum 2000. This ensures a wider range of coverage of the programmes of study and more secure progression throughout the school. Consequently pupils make very good progress and achieve well.
84. Teaching is consistently good. For the older pupils it is often excellent. Teachers use a variety of methods to engage pupils' interest and to involve them in practical activities. Teachers link the subject well with work from other disciplines. For instance, the Year 3 music linked effectively to their work on Roman history, gladiators and chariot races. Year 6 pupils gained an appreciation of the 1940s swing band music to heighten their understanding of the mood of the times as well as the detail of 'walking a line accompaniment' and blues notes. Not as many multi-cultural influences were observed. High expectations urge pupils on to work through challenging tasks. Year 6 have the highest expectation of all, but very clear instructions and support to enable them to succeed.

85. The school's philosophy, deriving from the headteacher, is to provide all children with the opportunity to experience and make progress in basic skills. Year 2, for instance, learn basic composition, singing and playing recorders. This provides a seed bed for talent. The school takes all pupils as far as they can go, but identifies gifted and talented musicians and helps them to go further. With the help of specialist teachers the talented pupils go through the grade system. Pupils who have special educational needs receive very good support in lessons and make very good progress. A large number of pupils take part in the extra-curricular music clubs and practices. The skills they gain feed back into the curriculum time and into institutions like the choir and the school orchestra.
86. The subject is exceptionally well led. The organisation of the timetable to allow specialist teaching works very well. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully through the system of key learning objectives, although these do not link entirely with the National Curriculum attainment criteria.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

87. Many facets of provision in this curriculum area are very good and this aspect is central to the school's very strong ethos of care and preparation for life. Health, exercise and safety aspects are covered in physical education. Health education and sex education are covered well in science. Social education is a consistent theme in all the school's work. The School Council is a model of democracy in action. The training in citizenship runs through all the school's curriculum as it develops pupils' awareness of the roles and responsibilities of living in a community.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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