

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL,
RADCLIFFE**

Radcliffe, Manchester

LEA area: Bury

Unique reference number: 105353

Headteacher: Mr P Heaton

Lead inspector: Mr E Jackson

Dates of inspection: 15 – 17 September 2003

Inspection number: 257854

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: 349

School address: Belgrave Street
Radcliffe
Manchester
Postcode: M26 4DG

Telephone number: 0161 723 4210
Fax number: 0161 253 7402

Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Fr. J Manock

Date of previous inspection: 8 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a larger than average primary school, with a nursery, that admits Catholic pupils from the parish, but also from a wider area. The school roll has fallen in recent years so that no year group is full, and there are some mixed age classes. Almost all the pupils are ethnically white, but there is a small group of pupils of Chinese heritage. The number of pupils with special needs is about average, as is the number with statutory statements of need. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Attainment at entry is also broadly average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3108	E Jackson	Lead inspector	Mathematics Physical education English as an additional language
9952	L Brock	Lay inspector	
5902	M Harrison	Team inspector	English Geography Music
10526	M Roe	Team inspector	Art and design History Foundation Stage Special educational needs
17767	S Power	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 1BB

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

St Mary's is a Roman Catholic Primary in Radcliffe, Bury. There are 348 pupils from 3-11 years old on roll.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils, despite considerable disruption in staffing last year. There is a good, caring atmosphere firmly founded in the school's Catholic mission, and the pupils' personal development is good throughout the school. The teaching is good in the nursery and reception classes, and in Years 1 and 2, leading to good achievement. However, the school has serious weaknesses in the teaching in the juniors (Key Stage 2), and many pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leadership and management have not been effective enough in ensuring that pupils continue to make the progress they should. Standards are high by age seven, but below what they should be by age 11. There is a recently appointed headteacher who has a clear agenda to improve the school. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils develop good personal skills, behave well and have very good attitudes to their work because the staff create and maintain a good atmosphere and successful relationships.
- Pupils achieved well above what might be expected by seven in reading and writing in national tests in 2002, and also did well in science, building on their good progress in the nursery and reception classes.
- Standards are too low in national tests by age 11 in English, mathematics and science because teachers' expectations of the pupils are not high enough, particularly some of those who could achieve high levels.
- The staff are committed to including all pupils in everything the school offers, but do not fully achieve this for all pupils.
- The curriculum is sound, and there is good enrichment through after school clubs and other activities. Music and art and design have improved, but there is not enough time given to art and design and technology, particularly for work in three dimensions.
- Parents are supportive of the school, and there are good links with the parish and other schools, including the partner High School.
- Leadership has been weak, and has not created a whole school drive to maintain and improve standards by age 11. The governors are very supportive, but have not asked the right questions of staff in key roles.

There have been some improvements since the last inspection, but teaching, learning and pupils' achievement have declined in the juniors (Key Stage 2). All statutory requirements are met, but the school improvement plan does not set out effective plans for action to deal with the school's weaknesses. However, the new headteacher has begun well, and is beginning to establish a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	C	D	E
Mathematics	C	D	D	E
Science	D	D	E	E

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Pupils do not achieve what they are capable of by age 11. Children achieve well in the nursery and reception classes, where they achieve the Early Learning Goals set for them, because the teaching is good. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics as the teaching is good, and focused on what they need to do to improve, so that standards are above average. Many pupils achieve high levels in reading and achieve well in music by age seven. In the inspection, pupils' achievement in Years 3 and 4 was satisfactory and sometimes good. This is an improvement on last year, when many parents were concerned about their children's progress. Achievement in English, mathematics and science is patchy in Years 5 and 6, and was unsatisfactory last year, because teachers do not build well enough on what the pupils already know and can do. Standards are below average in English, mathematics and science by age 11. By age 11, many pupils do not achieve what they are capable of in these subjects, and in ICT and physical education (PE). Standards have improved in the last few years by age seven, but have fallen by age 11, particularly for higher attaining pupils.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development, develop well. The staff work hard to help the pupils achieve the stated aims of a Catholic education in this aspect. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and have very good attitudes to their work. Older pupils take their responsibilities seriously. Attendance is good, and pupils are prompt so that lessons begin on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory education overall. Teaching and learning are better for the younger pupils, where the lessons interest the pupils, so that they are eager to learn. Teachers' lesson planning is good, based on good observation and marking, and ensures that different groups of pupils have the right work to do. There are good procedures to induct new children so that they learn new routines quickly. Older infants (Key Stage 1) learn calmness and respect in the school chapel, and music from a range of cultural traditions. Occasionally, pupils who need extra help are not given individual learning plans early enough. The teaching is more variable in Years 3 to 6. There are sometimes good lessons, where pupils are challenged effectively, but there is too much that is unsatisfactory. Too often the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are not used effectively to support learning in other subjects. Staff training in literacy is beginning to improve the teaching of writing, but too many older pupils have not been well enough taught previously to work at the levels expected. This includes some pupils who should have been expected to achieve higher levels. This is because the staff do not always base their lessons on pupils' achievements to set more demanding work.

The curriculum is sound, and aspects of art and design and music have improved since the last inspection. The diet of learning is more varied and interesting for the younger pupils. Older pupils spend the great majority of their time learning English, mathematics and religious education. The rest of the curriculum is not sufficiently well planned to link skills in subjects such as designing skills in art as well as design and technology, or literacy skills in history and geography. There is good enrichment through clubs, visits and visitors to the school. Partnership with parents is satisfactory, and they welcome the approachability of the staff.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory, but there is good potential for rapid improvement under the recently appointed head teacher. He has drawn up clear and appropriate priorities for improvement, but there has previously been a lack of clarity in school improvement planning. Staff with whole school roles are not always clear about how to fulfil them. It is also unclear who takes responsibility for the fall in standards by age 11. There is a great deal of information gathered about pupils' attainment, but the systems to use this to promote higher standards do not work, and are not rigorously monitored and evaluated. The school's administration and day-to-day organisation are smooth and effective. However, governors are not determined enough in holding the school to account not only for its standards, but also to ensure that the two separate school departments work more closely together in the pupils' interests.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents generally support the school, but recognise that improvements are needed. The pupils are very pleased to be at the school, and feel that the staff look after them well. The school does not yet seek the pupils' views enough.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has lost direction since the last inspection, and has serious weaknesses in teaching and learning at Key Stage 2, and in aspects of leadership and management.

- Senior management staff need to improve and widen their leadership roles, and governors should hold the school more accountable.
- The school needs a concerted effort by the whole staff to raise standards of teaching and learning in the juniors (Key Stage 2), supported by governors and parents.
- A strong focus on raising standards by age 11 is required, initially but not only in English, mathematics and science, emphasising consistent achievement throughout the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Children begin their education well in the nursery and reception classes, and are on track to achieve the levels expected as they move into Year 1 in the all the areas of learning leading to the Early Learning Goals. A good proportion of them attain at higher than expected levels in handling numbers, and in painting. **Pupils build successfully on this early learning in Years 1 and 2**, and achieved well above average levels in reading and writing, and average levels in mathematics in 2002, improved to above average in 2003. This shows good improvement since the last inspection. **Achievement is inconsistent in years 3 to 6, and overall the pupils do not build sufficiently on the levels they reached by age seven.** By 11, whilst the proportion reaching the expected levels in English, mathematics and science is close to the national average, the proportion attaining higher levels has fallen for the past four years, so that it is now well below average. Too many higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The trend in results by the end of Key Stage 1 is above the national trend, but has fallen below the national trend by the end of Key Stage 2. The school also failed to reach its agreed targets for higher attainers in 2003 by some margin, and results for the past two years have been well below those in schools that attained similar results for this cohort of pupils when they were seven. However, a success for the school has been the improvement in pupils' and staff's competence in ICT.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a new head teacher, who has already begun to raise the whole staff's expectations of pupils' capabilities, and to promote higher achievement.
- Standards are above average by seven in reading, mathematics and science because the staff's expectations are high.
- Pupils' achievement in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 is good because the teaching is good, and sometimes very good.
- Most pupils with special needs achieve as much as can be expected of them, including those with statements of their needs, because they receive effective support.
- Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is not consistent enough, and standards are too low by age 11 in English, particularly writing, mathematics, and science, because teaching does not build effectively on what the pupils have already learned.
- Achievement and standards in art and design and physical education by age 11 are unsatisfactory because pupils have not been taught effectively enough.
- Some children with special needs are not so identified in the infants leading to late notification of parents, and late individual education plans, and some underachievement.

Commentary

1. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well because the teaching and care they receive is good, and often very good. As the inspection was early in the school year, some children and their parents were still being introduced to the school. The staff establish very clear and effective routines straight away, so that both children and their parents know exactly what is expected of them. All the recommended areas of learning are covered well, and teachers' planning is very good in both nursery and reception classes. In the reception classes (one shared with Year 1 pupils), children build well on the skills they have developed in the nursery, because the staff plan their tasks based on what children already know and can do.
2. At Key Stage 1, the pupils receive consistent teaching and support from teachers and support staff so that they make good progress and achieve well by age seven. The cooperation between the staff added to their high expectations of the pupils' behaviour, attitude and effort leads to a good working atmosphere where the pupils thrive. Teachers' good marking of their

work gives the pupils good targets to aim for, and they also have good opportunities to develop their reading skills. Boys and girls make similar progress, and in general those pupils with special needs receive appropriate help and make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Some pupils are not registered as having special needs early enough, however. Pupils develop above average literacy and numeracy skills, and average ICT skills, although they do not have enough opportunities to use these in other areas of the curriculum.

- At Key Stage 2, teaching is less consistent, and achievement is unsatisfactory overall so that standards are lower than they should be by age 11, particularly for previously high attainers. This is because the staff's expectations are not high enough, and they do not ensure that pupils build consistently on the standards they have achieved as they enter Year 3. Senior managers and governors have also failed to hold the staff sufficiently to account for the lack of progress for some pupils. Those pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them, and achieve what they are capable of. Boys and girls attain similar levels, and those few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve similar levels to their peers. Literacy and numeracy skills are lower than average, but ICT skills are broadly average. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use these skills in other subjects. During the inspection, teaching and learning were better in Years 3 and 4 than in Years 5 and 6, leading to better achievement overall for younger pupils. However, below average attainment in art and design and physical education by 11 points to lower achievement lower down the school in the past for these pupils.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2002 (the last year with comparative data available)

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.7 (17.0)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	16.0 (15.0)	14.4 (14.3)
mathematics	16.5 (16.6)	16.5 (16.2)

There were 42 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2001).

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.1 (27.2)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	25.9 (25.8)	26.7 (26.6)
science	26.9 (27.6)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 55 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2001).

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

This aspect is a strength of the school. Attendance is good, pupils' attitudes to school are very good, and they behave well. They take their responsibilities seriously, but staff could expect more of them here. Spiritual, moral and social development are good, and cultural development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is good and most pupils arrive at school on time.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- Pupils behave very well in the Foundation years and in Years 1 and 2, and behave well in the juniors.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good.

- Insufficient opportunities for independent learning in lessons.

Commentary

4. The school successfully encourages pupils to attend regularly, and the great majority of parents support the school in this. Almost all pupils arrive at school on time, ensuring lessons have a prompt start. Holidays taken in term time account for most of the authorised absence.
5. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Children in the nursery and reception classes learn the routines of school life and gain the skills to work together well on a variety of activities. As a result, they are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development. All pupils are enthusiastic about school and show interest in the range of activities provided for them, and most persevere even when tasks seem difficult. For example, pupils in a Year 5 mathematics lesson worked hard to improve their knowledge of the division of numbers and most had achieved their learning objectives by the end of the lesson. Teachers and classroom assistants show a sincere respect for all pupils which encourages them to be involved in all that the school provides.
6. Pupils show a respect for the feelings and values of their class mates and others and relationships between all members of the school community are good. Their behaviour is good overall with particular strengths lower down the school. This contributes well to learning because teachers lose very little time having to restore order in the classroom. For example, children in a reception class behaved very well as they explored the similarities and differences between people and at this early stage in the school year, responded well to the teacher's high expectations of good behaviour. Behaviour around the school is sensible and there is no oppressive behaviour, harassment or racial tension. There have been no exclusions in the year prior to the inspection.
7. Pupils grow and thrive in a caring, Catholic community where they are given the opportunity to explore the values and beliefs which influence their lives. The school provides well for pupils' spiritual development, as seen when Year 1 pupils spent time in the calm atmosphere of the school Chapel in prayer and reflection. Also, before leaving school, Years 3 and 4 pupils reflected on their day in a calm, tranquil atmosphere. Pupils' personal development is good, but they need more opportunities to take charge of their own learning. They seldom have to make their own decisions about how they should tackle their work.
8. Pupils' moral and social development is good, exemplified in their good behaviour and in the way they work together. Lessons in personal and social education give pupils the opportunity to explore spiritual, moral and social issues whilst learning to be good citizens. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Whilst pupils have a sound awareness of their own culture, they need more opportunities to expand this to improve their knowledge of the rich cultural heritage of modern-day Britain and the wider world, such as through the good pen friend links with children in Romania.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.6
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.6
National data	0.5

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	316	0	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. However, whilst teaching and learning are good for the younger pupils, there are serious weaknesses in the teaching of the junior pupils. The curriculum provides a satisfactory basis for learning and meets all statutory requirements. The curriculum is enriched well by visits out, and visitors, and through the after-school activities provided by the staff.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory overall, and good in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1, leading to **good progress in learning, and good achievement, by age seven.** However, **teaching is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 2, and progress in pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science is too slow,** leading to lower achievement by age 11 than a significant proportion of the pupils are capable of. **Weak leadership and management in the past** has failed to identify and deal with a falling trend in the achievement of previously high attaining pupils at Key Stage 2 over the last three years. The staff's **expectations of the pupils' progress and achievement by age 11 have been too low,** but the recently appointed head teacher has begun to take action to raise these.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Three out of four lessons seen were good, with some very good lessons, in the Foundation Stage and in the infants, with none unsatisfactory.
- Just over one in four lessons seen were good in the juniors, with occasional very good lessons, but one in eight lessons were unsatisfactory or poor.
- There are examples of good and very good teaching from teachers and support staff throughout the school, and governors' recent staff appointments have been good.
- Pupils concentrate well, and apply themselves conscientiously to the tasks set for them, and generally understand the learning targets for the class. They unanimously praise the staff, and feel that there is always help when they need it. However, they have too few opportunities for independent and self-initiated work.
- The teaching and learning in ICT has improved, leading to satisfactory achievement by age 11.
- Literacy and numeracy are taught well up to age seven, although pupils do not have enough encouragement from the staff to use these skills in all their learning.
- These skills are not taught consistently enough in Years 3 to 6, and the staff do not set high enough expectations for a significant number of the pupils.
- The staff work hard, and have been involved in training to improve the teaching and learning of numeracy and literacy which is recently beginning to have some effect in the juniors.

- There is not enough co-operation between staff in the infant and junior sections of the school in ensuring that all pupils are expected to achieve what they are capable of by the age of 11.
- Assessment information is used effectively to plan new work for pupils in the Foundation Stage and the infants, but is not used effectively or consistently enough to set appropriately challenging work and targets based on what is known of pupils' prior achievement in the juniors.

Commentary

9. The staff successfully create a good working atmosphere and ethos for learning throughout the school. The whole staff's expectations are high in this regard, and the pupils respond very well. Younger pupils settle very well, and the staff provide well for their personal, social and emotional development. They also plan effectively to meet pupils' particular needs, and to ensure that all of them have full access to the learning opportunities provided so that the provision for pupils with special needs is satisfactory overall. However, some children who are noted as causing concern are not designated as having special educational needs at an early enough stage in the infants, in order that parents and the staff can plan more specific individual learning programmes for them. Overall, the Foundation Stage and infant staff ensure good progress in learning because they have a consistent approach, good understanding of the required curriculum and how children best learn, and challenge the children to improve effectively.
10. Support staff generally contribute effectively to pupils' learning, particularly for those with special needs. Occasionally, they do not sit close enough to the pupils to help them sufficiently during whole class sessions.
11. There are serious weaknesses in teaching and learning in the juniors because many of the pupils do not build successfully on their achievements by age seven to reach the levels they are capable of. Good lessons were observed during the inspection in all junior classes except one, and a very good ICT lesson was seen in Year 6. These good lessons included history, science and English in Years 3 and 4, English and mathematics in Year 5, and geography and science in Year 6. However, from an analysis of work saved from last year, the standard and quality of too many pupils' work fell as the year progressed, and teachers' marking was not specific enough to help pupils improve. In the four weak lessons, the chief factors slowing pupils' achievement were poor pace, too little involvement of the pupils in their own learning, and weak subject knowledge.
12. A number of parents complained about the quality of teaching in one of the mixed age classes last year, but surprisingly not about standards by age 11. In the past three years, significantly fewer children who attained the higher than expected Level 3 in English and mathematics went on by age 11 to attain the Level 5 in these subjects as they should have done. This is due to a number of factors:
 - There is too much unsatisfactory teaching, particularly in one class.
 - The staff do not expect enough of the pupils, and do not push higher attaining pupils enough.
 - Evidence from Year 2 national tests, and from Year 2 teachers' assessments, is not used effectively to set challenging enough targets for staff and children to reach year-on-year in the juniors.
 - There has been a lack of rigour at all levels of leadership and management in monitoring staff's and pupils' performance, and in holding staff to account for their pupils' progress and achievement.
13. The new head teacher has already begun to address the weaknesses, and to set whole school shared expectations for pupils' achievement and attainment. There is very recent evidence that the training staff have received has begun to improve their practice, as in the more effective marking of work seen at Key Stage 2 during the inspection. An encouraging sign is that the staff recognise that there are serious issues to address, and are keen to work together, under

the leadership of the head teacher, in order to improve pupils' achievement and attainment by the end of Year 6.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 58 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	7 (12%)	22 (38%)	25 (43%)	3 (5%)	1 (2%)	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.

The curriculum

The curriculum provides a satisfactory basis for learning and meets all statutory requirements. There are some shortcomings in the provision made for pupils capable of higher attainment in the juniors. Opportunities for curriculum enrichment and extra curricular provision are good. The school accommodation is of good quality and there are sufficient teaching and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. The quality and quantity of resources for meeting learning needs is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- After school and out of school activities enrich learning.
- Foundation Stage curriculum is good.
- Concentration on English and mathematics leads to good achievement at Key Stage 1.
- Pupils are prepared well for transfer to secondary education by their good personal development.
- Spacious and well-kept accommodation.
- The curriculum is not fully balanced, particularly in relation to art and design, and design and technology.
- Some pupils in Years 1 and 2 with special educational needs are not so recorded, and pupils capable of higher attainment often underachieve in the juniors.
- Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are not used well across the curriculum.
- The quality of many books in the junior library is not good enough.

Commentary

14. The curriculum meets minimum statutory requirements by including all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and health education. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides a rich and broad education for the younger pupils. The balance of the curriculum gives an appropriate emphasis to literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and religious education. This leads to good achievement at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and numeracy. However some creative areas, notably design and technology and art and design, have a comparatively low profile and are given limited allocations of curriculum time. This diminishes opportunities for the pupils' creative development. This was identified as a weakness in the last inspection.
15. All curriculum areas follow national guidelines but in some subjects these have not been sufficiently adapted and interpreted to meet the needs of the school. This results in work often not being adapted enough to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. The learning needs of some pupils with special educational needs and pupils capable of higher attainment are sometimes not met sufficiently in some classes in Key Stage 2 due to the inflexible interpretation of schemes of work.

16. The development of the curriculum has lacked cohesion and focus in recent years and this has led to a fragmented approach to curriculum delivery. Important links between subjects and skill development are not clearly identified or monitored and the pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are not used consistently across the curriculum.
17. After school clubs, visits and other curriculum enrichment activities make a good contribution to the quality of pupils' learning and their social development, particularly in the areas of sport and the arts. Activities such as the choir visit to a music festival and a residential outdoor pursuits weekend make very valuable contributions to the curriculum and to the pupils' personal development.
18. The spacious accommodation provides ample teaching space and the quality and quantity of resources for most subjects is satisfactory. The creation of a computer suite and the generous level of resources for information and communication technology have greatly enhanced provision in this subject since the last inspection. Although library resources for younger pupils are good, the Key Stage 2 library is in need of replenishment due to the number of outdated texts and books in poor condition.

Care, guidance and support

The staff and governing body work together well to create a caring school where the personal needs of all pupils are well met. All adults in the school provide strong and supportive role models for pupils. There is a positive atmosphere in the school and teachers and classroom assistants know their pupils well. The school fulfils its mission statement of providing a safe, enjoyable environment in which children are prepared for life.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good procedures for the care, welfare and health and safety of pupils.
 - Good induction for new pupils, and transfer arrangements for older pupils.
 - Good opportunities for pupils to grow in maturity.
 - The comprehensive pupil assessment and tracking records are not always effectively evaluated and interpreted.
19. There are good child protection procedures which work well when tested. The school has good relationships with a range of external agencies on behalf of pupils. Staff are aware of their individual responsibilities in ensuring the safety and well-being of all pupils. Although the school has yet to update its own health and safety policy, it follows local authority guidelines for the reporting of health and safety. There is an appropriate Internet access policy and a disability access plan. Risk assessments are undertaken by the site manager and a governor from the premises committee and the local authority offers good guidance to the school on the procedures to follow. The school building provides a safe, secure learning environment in which pupils can grow and flourish. The site manager ensures that the site is safe, clean and free from debris. There is a generous number of adults with first aid qualifications and the medical needs of pupils are given careful attention.
 20. Children in the Foundation years have a good induction programme which helps them to settle down quickly. Pupils in Year 6 confirm that the school is preparing them well for transfer to high school but they would like to be more involved in school developments. The head teacher is re-instituting the lapsed School Council to improve this. Responses to the pupil questionnaires show that pupils are confident that teachers are fair and there is always someone they can turn to for help and advice. Older pupils act as "Guardian Angels" to younger pupils and parents are confident that their children learn in a safe, secure environment. A number of pupils commented that they valued the now defunct School Council, which the head teacher intends to re-institute this term.

21. Teachers know and respect pupils and respond to their academic and personal needs, including those few from minority ethnic groups. There is a comprehensive tracking programme for each pupil but the information gained is not fully utilised for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good although there are not enough opportunities for pupils take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in all activities. The school provides a range of experiences that helps pupils to mature into responsible and caring individuals. These include visits out of school and residential experiences for older pupils. This caring approach extends to the wider community when pupils collect for a range of charities at home and abroad. Pupils mature and grow into responsible young adults within the "family" of St. Mary's School.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory, and it is good with other schools and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most parents support the school, and feel that their children like school.
 - There are good links with the community and other schools and colleges.
 - Parents are not sufficiently involved in children's learning and the life of the school.
 - Parents do not receive precise enough information on their children's progress.
22. Parents with children in the Foundation years are happy with the amount of information they receive and about the induction arrangements for their children. Whilst the school sends newsletters to parents and information about events in the school, parents would like more information about what their children are learning in order to offer maximum support. Some parents are unclear about homework arrangements and how the school tracks individual progress. Whilst the school offers three consultation evenings each year, a quarter of the responses to the parental questionnaire show that parents do not feel well informed about their children's progress. Annual reports to parents on pupils' progress are satisfactory overall and include targets for improvement but parents would like more information on the levels that their children are achieving.
23. There is satisfactory involvement of parents in children's learning. Parents are interested in the life of the school but would like to be more involved in decisions that affect the future of their children. Whilst the school has an open door policy and teachers are approachable, there is no formal mechanism for seeking, valuing and acting on their views. There are suggestion boxes at strategic points in the school but this system has not proved successful in inviting parents' comments. Parents take advantage of invitations to assemblies and concerts and support their children in their efforts in fund-raising for charities. There is a Parent Teacher Association but interest in it has declined and a fresh impetus is needed to re-form it.
24. There are good links with the community, particularly the church. The priest is a regular and well-known visitor to the school when he holds Mass and talks to children. The school choir performs at the Manchester Evening News Arena, and for elderly people in a local nursing home. Pupils donate goods for the homeless and send gift boxes to Romania. The school is part of an Asylum Seekers Support Group and pupils collect for St. Francis House Hospice. Grandparents are invited into school for a party and there are summer and Christmas Fairs for the local community. Pupils participate in inter-schools sporting events and are included in the Football in the Community Initiative when Bury Football Club comes into school. All these good links raise the awareness of pupils of the importance of the school to the local community and their chance to be good citizens.

25. The school has good links with local schools and link high schools. For example, a teacher from the main receiving high school teaches French to Year 5 pupils. The school works actively with partner schools to ensure effective and supportive transition and induction arrangements. The school welcomes students from schools and colleges who spend their work placements in the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

This aspect is unsatisfactory. Both leadership and management are unsatisfactory because the school has a legacy of unsatisfactory leadership which has had a negative effect on the action intended to address underachievement by age 11. Developments have been hindered because staff are unclear about their management roles and responsibilities. The governance of the school is also unsatisfactory, despite the willingness and interest of individual governors, including the chair. However, the recently appointed head teacher has the backing of the whole school community to tackle the identified weaknesses in achievement at Key Stage 2, and unsatisfactory aspects of leadership and management. A strength of the school is in the good personal development of the pupils, leading to very good attitudes to learning, and good behaviour.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governors are supportive, and have created a positive ethos for personal development. They have recently recruited an experienced head teacher and have given him a strong remit for improvement.
- The head teacher has quickly developed an accurate picture of the acute needs of the school as a learning organisation.
- He has gained a range of perspectives through monitoring teaching and learning, resulting in many appropriate recommendations for improvement.
- The school makes the most of the money it has.
- A good system for the induction of newly qualified staff which builds on the school's experience as a partner in initial teacher training.
- The governing body does not hold the senior management team sufficiently to account for the school's performance. They rely too much on head teacher's reports to gauge the needs of the school.
- Individual teachers are not sufficiently held to account for the progress of their pupils.
- There has been no-one in the senior management team to inspire and motivate staff and raise their expectations of what pupils can learn, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- There is a lack of a positive shared vision within the school to promote pupils' achievement, alongside the successful promotion of their personal development. Good recommendations for improvement have not been turned into reality.
- Poor school improvement planning with no sharp focus on pupil achievement, particularly at Key Stage 2.

Commentary

26. Over the past few years the school's leadership has not created a positive climate for development, renewal and reinvigoration. Staff, parents and governors have seen pupils' performance in end of Key Stage 2 national tests decline. The gains made by younger pupils have slipped away as they move through the school, yet there has been no urgency to take responsibility for this, nor to take appropriate action. This has been affected in part by staff absence, and by the head teacher and another senior member of staff leaving the school last year. Parents commented that the deputy head had performed her duties well as acting head for the last two terms, and inspection evidence is that this holding role was performed satisfactorily.
27. Governors are supportive of the school and carry out their statutory duties satisfactorily. They are committed to the school's provision of a Catholic education for its pupils particularly their

moral and spiritual development. Importantly, they have been successful in attracting and recruiting an experienced and previously successful head teacher, giving him a strong remit for improvement. However, they have been too reliant on the head teacher's reports and assurances in the past. They have not held the senior managers to account for the school's falling standards by age 11 and for the way that pupils' relative performance has declined as they went through the school. Some governors had developed their own views of the broad strengths and weaknesses of the school and of what was necessary in order to take it forward, but not the confidence to insist that matters were put right.

28. In the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, teachers and support staff have created a strong sense of teamwork. They have agreed priorities and are fully committed to them. They show mutual support and have developed common approaches to challenging and supporting their pupils. This has proved successful in raising attainment. In Key Stage 2 teachers have not been held to account in the same way and this has led to a significant decline in standards, especially for potentially higher attaining pupils. This is exemplified by the standard of pupils' work in books in some junior classes which deteriorated over last year rather than improved. *Indeed, although the infant and junior schools amalgamated over 10 years ago, the two departments of the school appear to have a different ethos and expectations.*
29. In some subject areas teachers with subject leadership responsibilities have been effective. In some cases, music and art for example, they have raised the quality of provision and standards of attainment. However many do not see themselves as responsible for the whole-school outcomes in their subjects nor are they always knowledgeable about the work which goes on in parts of the school other than the one in which they work. The deputy head is making an important contribution to the induction of the new head teacher, and was recognised by parents and governors as having ensured that the school functioned satisfactorily whilst she was acting head for two terms. Departmental coordinators have each in their turn been responsible for curriculum innovations and staff training, but none have the over-view necessary to substitute for the necessary whole-school vision. This is because they have not been expected to develop the whole school perspective needed to fulfil their roles effectively.
30. Various systems have been developed to monitor aspects of the school's work. In some cases action plans have been drawn up as a consequence but the impact of these activities has been minimal. Some of the listed recommendations from two or three years ago were identical to the feedback given to teachers during this inspection. Staff have not been sufficiently inspired and motivated to turn good recommendations for improvement into reality and raise their expectations of what pupils should achieve. Even where monitoring and identification of weaknesses has led to agreed policies, for example the marking policy, not all staff adhere to it. Thus some pupils do not get the benefits from the intended improvements.
31. Without a clear vision and direction it has been difficult for the school to establish appropriate agreed priorities. The school improvement plan is a poor document without a clear, measurable agenda for improving achievement, teaching and learning. Several initiatives spoken about as underway do not appear in the document and some aspects of the plan have not been pursued. Currently, teachers choose which training courses to attend and recommend the most interesting ones for other colleagues to experience rather than being detailed to learn from specific programmes for the benefit of the whole school. There is also no effective link between planned professional development and the training needs identified during classroom observations and discussions as part of staff performance management.
32. Sound use is made of specific grants and the school uses the money it has wisely for the most part. Principles of best value for purchases are applied and contribute to the cost effectiveness of the school. However, the school has not sufficiently used comparisons of the school's performance with that of other similar schools nationally to review whether the targets they set are realistically challenging, or whether achievement is good enough. Currently the school does not get best value from the deployment of teaching assistants. Those employed in this capacity have a variety of skills and when supporting the learning of individuals and groups contribute

very effectively. However, during the inspection many were underemployed during the introductory and rounding off sessions of lessons and better management of their involvement with individuals and groups would considerably increase the value added by their presence.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	829,516
Total expenditure	851,394
Expenditure per pupil	2,214

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	15,182
Balance carried forward to the next	- 6,696

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

33. **Provision in the Foundation Stage is good in both the nursery and reception classes.** There is no unsatisfactory teaching, and a good proportion of the teaching seen was very good. The active learning environment where independence is positively promoted and where learning is supported, developed and extended, results in good teaching and learning and good achievement by the majority of pupils. As a result most pupils are on track to reach the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning as they enter Year 1. Pupils with specific needs are well supported and achieve as well as they can and some pupils exceed the expected levels especially in mathematical development and in some aspects of creative development. The effective teamwork ensures a good quality of experience across the Foundation Stage. Communication with parents is also good.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teaching is consistently good in both the nursery and reception classes. Most children achieve well in developing the full range of their personal and social skills. By the end of reception most children reach the Early Learning Goals which relate to personal, social and emotional development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Clear routines.
- Good relationships.
- Children able to make choices.
- Positive attitudes to learning.
- Good behaviour.
- High levels of confidence and self-esteem.
- The staff manage effectively those children with poorly developed social skills.

Commentary

34. The clear routines help the majority of children to settle well. For example, the well organised lunchtime period ensures that the experience is calm and friendly with staff using this time well to get to know the children and develop social and self care skills. Good relationships fostered by staff result in good social interaction between pupils. The stated commitment by all the staff to giving pupils choices, space and support to try things out for themselves and to developing independence and self esteem is evident in the way the curriculum and the Foundation Stage environment are planned and organised. The skilled support, interaction and sensitive intervention from all adults enables most children to join in activities. For example, when all the children were sitting together at the end of the day, a reluctant child was brought into the activity by an adult encouraging another child to reach out her hand to him.

COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Teaching is good. Most children achieve well in the range of skills involved in speaking, listening, reading and writing and are on track to reach the Early Learning Goals by the end of reception.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning across the Foundation Stage.
- Children are confident speakers and listeners both in small and large groups.
- Children with underdeveloped language skills and those with a good level of language on entry to

school achieve well in relation to their previous performance.

- Writing is valued and planned throughout the Foundation Stage as an integral part of the curriculum and is also taught systematically.
- High priority is given to developing children's skills in recognising sounds in words and in developing early reading skills.

Commentary

35. The range of well planned activities enables all children to develop and extend their spoken language skills in a learning environment that encourages their active involvement. Language is valued, and is exemplified well by staff in their conversations and more formal interactions with individuals and groups. This results in children developing a wide vocabulary and knowledge of differing language structures, which they use well in their problem solving and in their imaginative play. For example, in reception a girl used dialogue really well for several imaginary characters in small world play. As a result of writing being systematically taught across many activities, most children write their own names, form letters correctly and can write simple words, phrases and a few even sentences independently. Children develop their early reading skills effectively including associating letter shapes with sounds. This is because the staff place a high priority on developing word skills but at the same time promote the enjoyment of books both for pleasure and for information.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Teaching is good across the Foundation Stage. Standards are in line with those expected by age five in relation to the Early Learning Goals. Many pupils reach levels beyond those expected in calculating and handling numbers. Good progress in the nursery leads to good achievement by the end of the reception year.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement across a broad range of mathematical activities by all pupils throughout the Foundation Stage because there is a good range of mathematical activities.
- A significant number attain levels beyond the Early Learning goals by the end of reception especially in calculating and working with numbers.

Commentary

36. Throughout the Foundation Stage the staff develop, reinforce and extend children's mathematical understanding through a range of activities that enable them to count, measure, match and acquire mathematical vocabulary. Staff use opportunities to reinforce number concepts, for example through playing games, singing and acting out counting rhymes and stories using pictures and puppets. Children take part with great enthusiasm and as a result develop good vocabulary and a sound understanding of the number system. They also develop good spatial awareness in regular outdoor activities. As a result, by the end of the Foundation Stage most pupils are secure in their counting skills to ten and beyond and many solve problems involving addition and subtraction up to 15 and a few up to 20, above expectations for their age.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Teaching is good with most children on track to reach the Early Learning Goals by the time they reach the end of reception. Children achieve well and make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A rich learning environment both indoors and outdoors.
- Good opportunities to explore, investigate, design, make and find out more about the world.
- Skilled adult intervention in activities.

Commentary

37. The provision is effective in helping children to explore, build and investigate using a range of natural and made materials across a range of activities. This is due to the skilled way that the learning environment both indoors and out is set up to promote learning. Children are encouraged to experiment but have enough help from adults in order to give them support and develop and extend their skills. For example, in the outdoor area children were encouraged to 'think big' when using large equipment for their aeroplane. Children are encouraged to use their developing computer skills effectively to support reading and mathematical activities. They enjoy taking on different roles and understand that people are different. For example, they observed similarities and differences in their facial features as a result of a class discussion and use of an information book that was shared by the teacher. They learn effectively about the school in its locality, and develop a good sense of the recent past.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The good teaching using both indoor and outside areas enables most children to achieve well and make good progress in becoming aware of space and movement and in using equipment and tools. Pupils make sound progress in developing an understanding of their bodies and what they need to be healthy and play safely. Children are on track to reach the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception class.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning of physical development is good.
- The good organisation of a safe learning environment which provides scope for children to move with freedom.
- Teachers are knowledgeable about how children develop skills.
- Activities that challenge and motivate the children to meet individual needs.
- Children achieve well in developing an awareness of space and movement and in developing skills in using equipment and tools.

Commentary

38. Good teaching and good management of the indoor and outdoor environment enable children achieve well and from an early stage in their handling of play equipment including bats and balls, push and pull and pedal toys. They also develop an understanding of space and how they can work within it for example when building and when steering vehicles. The children's individual needs and levels of skill and confidence are well known to staff who give just enough support to children to enable them to work safely but independently. Pupils are developing both large and fine co-ordination skills using equipment and tools of different sizes.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Teaching is good with most children achieving well especially in developing their creativity using a range of media and resources. Some children make good progress in painting. Standards are in line to meet the early learning goals for creative development at the end of the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching and learning of creative development is good.
- Children achieve well in painting from observation and from their imagination.
- There are good opportunities to use a range of media and materials and to make their own choices.
- Children learn skills and techniques with a range of tools.

Commentary

39. The good planning and organisation of space and materials enable children to have access to a range of creative, imaginative and musical activities both indoors and out. For example, children in the outside area had freedom to paint on the floor and experiment with sound. The staff actively encourage them to make choices so that children are able to express their creative ideas and imagination spontaneously. In painting and collage work children mix paint well to produce a range of colours. The self-portraits produced in reception reflect the children's individuality well. Adults support children well in developing their creativity by making suggestions and by developing and extending their skills and techniques in handling tools and media. The work that nursery children attempted with an artist demonstrated their developing observational skills and their growing confidence in handling watercolours. This resulted in work that was of very good quality for such young children.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Standards and achievement are good in the infants, but unsatisfactory in the juniors. Both aspects have declined by age 11 since the last inspection. This is because teaching in the juniors does not capitalise effectively on the good work in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in Years 1 to 2 and as a result pupils achieve well and results in reading and writing are high.
- In these classes teachers' assessment of their work is very helpful to pupils. They are made to understand what they have to do to improve, and their performance is carefully tracked.
- By the time they leave Year 6, many pupils could achieve more, especially in writing. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 do not build sufficiently on pupils' achievements in Years 1 and 2, including some of those with special needs, and those who are capable of high attainment.
- During the inspection, teaching and learning were satisfactory overall in Years 3 to 6. However, work in pupil's books from last year shows that they do not consistently benefit from teaching of this standard. Teachers in the juniors do not follow the school's marking policy consistently.
- Language skills are not developed well in other subjects. For example, opportunities are missed for pupils to practise writing reports and accounts in other subjects such as science and the humanities.

Commentary

40. Pupils in Year 2 achieve a good standard in reading and writing because they are well taught. National test results in 2002 show that the pupils were in the top 20 per cent of schools in reading and writing, maintaining an improving trend above the national rise. Work in pupils' books shows clear gains in their understanding and the skills they demonstrate. Letter formation, sentence construction and spelling develop well month by month and the volume of work tackled by each pupil increases well over the year. Pupils make this good progress because teachers and classroom support assistants in Years 1 and 2 have developed a consistent approach to using the National Literacy Strategy, know their pupils well and ensure a

good match between the learning needs of the pupils and the work they are given to do. Feedback to pupils is very helpful, showing them exactly how they can improve further. Teachers often comment a few weeks later on how far the pupil has improved in the targeted skill. Teachers skilfully help pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills with timely adult intervention in their discussions, and these underpin the gains they make in written work.

41. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 have not built sufficiently on the strengths of pupils' achievements in Years 1 and 2 particularly those who are capable of high attainment. Results in the 2002 Year 6 national tests showed that one third of pupils did not reach the nationally expected standard. When compared to similar schools, Year 6 pupils at St Mary's were in the lowest 20% of the country. Analysis of the 2003 test results by the local authority shows that whereas this group of pupils in 1999 (when they were in Year 2) had writing skills considerably better than the average for other pupils of the same age in the borough, four years later (when they were in Year 6) these pupils' skills were well below others in the locality. They are capable of more than they achieved, and have been let down by the staff's low expectations, and poor evaluation and action based on the clear evidence of falling standards from regular assessments and tests.
42. Large numbers of pupils enter Year 3 each year (43 per cent in 2002) with reading and writing skills two years in advance of those expected nationally. These pupils should, with appropriate support and challenge, achieve the higher level 5 by the time they take the Year 6 tests. However, in 2003 less than one in ten of the school's 11-year-olds achieved this level, indicating unsatisfactory achievement for many. Some pupils regressed in their work during the year and frequently feedback to pupils through teachers' marking did not give them sufficient indication as to what skills or understandings they had to master in order to improve. Instances of editing and rewriting passages of writing are infrequent. Across the key stage there are too few opportunities for pupils to write non-fiction accounts and reports, although the grammar and layout of letters are well practised.
43. Pupils are supported in learning to read by effective dialogue between parents and teachers through reading diaries. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good use of the school library. Here books are attractively presented with clear guidance to help the pupils find what they want. The library for Year 3 to 6 pupils is poorly presented and used. Many of the books contain stereotypes of role models for men and women; black and Asian citizens are under-represented and some of the science books from the early 1960s were printed before man walked on the moon! In discussions, older pupils could not remember when they had last used the school library.
44. Teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory overall. It ranged from poor to good, with the balance of good teaching taking place in Years 1 & 2. In the good sessions, teachers display a secure knowledge of what is to be learned and have high expectations that pupils will achieve well. For example, most pupils in a Year 2 class, beginning to work with instructional texts, learned to use the language of instruction in spoken, written and diagrammatic form according to their capability. Teachers regularly discuss with pupils what they have learned so far and encourage them to go further. Pupils from minority ethnic groups receive the same support as their peers. By contrast, pupils who experience poor teaching in a Year 5 class are not motivated, their contributions are not valued and the teacher focuses on the activities to be completed rather than the learning intended.
45. There is also a variation in the benefits to pupils in the way teaching assistants are deployed throughout the school. Frequently, individuals and groups are helped by the attention of a teaching assistant and given the personal attention they need to access the materials, read the instructions and understand the concepts involved. In this way the presence of the teaching assistant adds considerably to the lesson, particularly for those pupils with specific needs. Pupils learn what is intended. However, particularly in the introductory and closing parts of the literacy hour, teaching assistants often play no constructive part in helping the pupils to learn.

46. The previous subject leader carried out a number of monitoring exercises, observing teaching, reviewing pupil's work and analysing test results. This culminated in a number of appropriate recommendations, training sessions involving local authority staff, and new guidance documents. These have so far had little impact on pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6. However, there were encouraging signs during the inspection that some of these recommendations, such as to set targets for improvement whilst marking pupils' work, were being adopted more consistently by staff in the juniors.

Language and literacy across the curriculum.

47. Writing skills are not sufficiently practised in science and the humanities. However, reading skills underpin learning in many subjects and are used well. In several classes, pupils are encouraged to draw together and compare through discussion information they have gained from newspapers, books and the Internet.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is satisfactory overall, but has unsatisfactory features in some classes in Years 3 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by seven and achievement is good because the teaching is sound with some good features.
- Standards are below average by age 11 and achievement is unsatisfactory because the teaching is not demanding enough, particularly of potentially high attaining pupils.
- Teaching is good in the infants and was satisfactory during the inspection in the juniors, but unsatisfactory overall in Years 3 to 6 because pupils do not build effectively enough on their prior learning.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes to learning are good in lessons, and they respond well to what is expected of them.
- Subject leadership is sound, but the staff cannot explain convincingly the reasons for falling standards by 11.
- Good use is often made of practical equipment to support learning in KS1 and some pupils with special needs in Years 3 and 4. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use practical support materials for problem-solving at Key Stage 2, and insufficient use is made of ICT.

Commentary

48. Teachers and support staff support pupils' full coverage of the mathematics curriculum well in Years 1 and 2. They follow the national guidance of the Numeracy Strategy, adapting it to their pupils' needs effectively, including those having difficulties. They have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour, attitudes and work-rate, and involve all pupils successfully in the lessons. Much of the pupils' work is based on a commercial scheme, including practical workbooks. This supports pupils' learning reasonably, supplemented by worksheets prepared by the staff, and contributes to the above average standards achieved. The pupils respond well to the teachers' calm, affirmative style, and support staff are used well to support groups.
49. In Key Stage 2, teaching was satisfactory during the inspection, and pupils made satisfactory progress in their learning. However, achievement is currently better for pupils in Years 3 and 4 than in Years 5 and 6. This is partly because staff development has begun to improve teachers' expectations of their pupils' capabilities in Years 3 and 4. The under-achievement by age 11 reflects a legacy of underachievement lower down the school for the older pupils. For example, recorded information for one Year 6 class shows that none of the pupils made the expected progress in the subject last year when they were in Year 5. Year 6 pupils discussing

the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes showed below average knowledge for their age, and had to be prompted constantly by their teachers to use the appropriate mathematical vocabulary. This is why teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. However, in a good lesson, Year 5 pupils responded well to the teacher's and support assistant's questions in developing their understanding of different methods of division. This was because the teacher had re-planned the lesson based on her assessment of the pupils' below average levels of attainment from the previous lesson.

50. Teachers of mixed age classes in Years 3 and 4 pitched their work on double and near doubles more at Year 3 than Year 4 in the oral sessions. Support staff were not deployed as effectively as they could have been to take one age group whilst the teacher took the other, or to work with pupils from both age groups who are at the same level in mathematics. However, good support is offered to lower attaining pupils and those with special needs using practical materials in working out the addition of near double numbers such as 24 and 25. Opportunities were missed to help the pupils organise their work more effectively, however. Year 3 pupils' work is currently more closely matched to their needs in the early part of the lesson, although a group of higher attaining Year 4 pupils were effectively challenged by the work set for them from their text books later.
51. Subject leadership is sound, and improvements are beginning to show in the achievement of Year 3 and 4 pupils. However, none of the staff were able to account for the fall in standards by age 11 over the last few years, and this is a weakness.

Mathematics across the curriculum

52. There is some use of pupils' mathematical skills in science when taking temperatures for example, and in DT when measuring for making models. Pupils in the infants also use the workbooks from a commercial scheme to cover work in measures, unlike the juniors, but this takes place within the subject lessons. However, there was little evidence in the work saved from last year that the staff plan effectively to use and develop mathematical skills through other subjects. This also applies to the skills pupils develop in ICT. For example, there was little evidence of the use of software programs to handle and interrogate data.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is satisfactory overall. However, there are significant weaknesses in standards and teaching in Key Stage 2. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards attained by pupils by age seven.
- Pupils' achievement in the infants is good in relation to their prior attainment.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the work are good throughout the school.
- Pupils' achievement in the juniors is not high enough, particularly in scientific enquiry, and the standards attained by age 11 are too low.
- The quality of teaching is weak in some lessons and the marking of work could be improved in the juniors.
- The provision made for higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is unsatisfactory in the juniors.
- Leadership and management is not effective enough.

Commentary

53. Standards in science are above average by age seven and the great majority of pupils make good progress and achieve well in developing their scientific skills and knowledge so that their

achievement is good. However, standards decline significantly by age 11 and are well below average at the end of the key stage, and achievement is unsatisfactory. This represents a decline since the last inspection. This is due mainly to the undemanding way in which the subject is taught and insufficient opportunities for practical investigative learning. The higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 do not achieve as well as they should because the work set for them does not challenge them make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when they are engaged productively in practical tasks, but the teaching does not always take sufficient account of their individual needs. Attainment in scientific enquiry by 11 is below the expected levels due to insufficient emphasis placed on this area of the subject in lessons.

54. In the infants, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Learning is set in appropriate and interesting contexts so that pupils engage well with the lessons and achieve well in relation to their previous levels of learning. In a significant proportion of lessons in the juniors, the teaching is not sufficiently inspiring and pupils are given mundane worksheet tasks or expected to copy the teacher's words rather than to communicate their learning in their own words. Overall, teaching here is unsatisfactory. During the inspection, several lessons in Years 3 to 6 were focused on investigative work and pupils showed they were capable of making good progress in this area when given the opportunity. However, the work in pupils' books shows that insufficient emphasis is placed on the development of scientific enquiry skills during the key stage. In both key stages, whilst marking of work is affirmative, it makes too little demand of pupils and rarely tells them how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve their subject understanding and skills.
55. Leadership and management in science are unsatisfactory and do not provide the drive needed to move the subject forward. The nominated coordinator for the subject has been given insufficient opportunity to fulfil her role across the school, and has had little influence on the direction the subject has been taking, particularly in the upper age groups. Her role in steering the subject is not clearly defined. Consequently, insufficient monitoring of standards, teaching and subject quality is carried out and the action taken to develop the subject has been ineffective in halting the decline at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in the subject is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources for teaching the subject are good, including a well equipped computer suite.
- Leadership and management are effective.
- Pupils' attitudes and response are good.
- Not enough use of ICT to support learning in other subjects.
- The level of challenge for higher attaining pupils in some lessons is too low.
- Some teachers lack confidence in aspects of data handling and using e-mail.

Commentary

56. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards, teaching and learning by age seven. By age 11, the great majority of pupils reach the expected level for their age in handling text and graphics and in control of devices. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but there are sometimes weaknesses in the level of challenge provided for higher attaining pupils, who are capable of more rapid progress due to their experiences of computer technology outside school. Occasionally, these pupils are given tasks that fail to build well enough on their existing learning. Conversely, in a very good lesson in Year 6, the teacher checked the pupils' existing understanding in order to match the level of challenge in the task to the pupils' learning needs. This resulted in the higher attaining pupils making rapid strides in learning new skills while the less able pupils worked at their own pace to consolidate

and extend their understanding of basic skills. In this lesson, all pupils were able to make very good progress and achieved well in relation to their prior learning. Most pupils show great enjoyment of their lessons and their positive attitudes to the subject are a strong contributing factor in their improving levels of achievement.

57. The subject enjoys strong curriculum leadership from a well-informed coordinator who maintains a good overview of the subject and has had a significant impact on the improvement in provision evident since the time of the last inspection. She has correctly identified areas in need of development, including the use of e-mail and teacher expertise in the use of spreadsheets. The subject benefits from a well-equipped computer suite, an adequate number of classroom based computers and a good range of appropriate hardware and software to enable full curriculum coverage. Good use of the computer suite now ensures that all pupils have regular access to computers and provides a more effective means for teaching the required skills.

ICT across the curriculum

58. ICT skills are not sufficiently developed and applied to work in other subjects. There is scope for better use of ICT skills across all subjects of the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

59. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 1 in history, so no teaching judgement is possible, but discussion with pupils in Year 2 took place and current work was discussed. Three lessons were seen in the juniors. Only one lesson was seen in geography, in Year 6, but further evidence was gathered from work on display, photographs and files. No judgements about overall provision are possible, and as the inspection was early in the year, there was little evidence from pupils' work available. Religious Education was not inspected, but two lessons were observed to gather evidence on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

History

Provision is satisfactory. Standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally by ages seven and 11. However, achievement varies across the school with the younger pupils making better progress. Most groups of pupils achieve similar levels in relation to their prior attainment because teachers' planning is developing consistency. However, higher attaining pupils in the upper end of Key Stage 2 do not achieve as much as they could. This is due to some lack of challenge in the teaching, and earlier inconsistent development of the full range of historical skills.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards across the school meet those expected.
- Good level of achievement by all pupils in the infants.
- Attitudes and behaviour of pupils in both key stages.
- Good planning which addresses individual needs for the majority of pupils.
- There is a developing consistency and continuity in curriculum planning.
- Low achievement of higher attainers by age 11.
- Lack of challenge in some lessons in the juniors.
- Inconsistent development of the range of historical skills across the school.
- Occasional unsatisfactory teaching.
- Inconsistent subject leadership.

Commentary

60. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well and develop a good understanding of topics studied. This applies equally to pupils with special educational needs and to higher attaining pupils.

Teachers' planning takes account of pupils' previous learning and work is well matched to their needs so that all developed their knowledge and understanding, for example, of the work of Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale and the historical context in which they lived. Discussion with these pupils showed their positive attitudes to the subject: they were eager to share their knowledge and ask questions.

61. In the juniors, achievement is variable and pupils' development is not equally consistent. Teaching and learning varies in quality and although broadly satisfactory, there are occasional instances of unsatisfactory practice. In a good lesson on the Ancient Egyptians, pupils worked well in groups and used research skills and a range of resources well to find out about the different aspects of the people's lifestyle. Pupils with differing levels of attainment were challenged by these tasks and all were contributing successfully at their own level. However, pupils are not always challenged and motivated during lessons because some teachers do not fully engage them, especially in expressing their opinions in whole class sessions. In particular, this affects how well higher attaining pupils achieve in particular, especially in developing their skills in evaluating and interpreting events. On more than one occasion pupils found it hard to persevere with written work and the very warm classroom environment did not help.
62. The school has made some improvements to the continuity and consistency of the curriculum since the last inspection and this has had a positive effect both on levels of achievement and on teaching and learning at Key Stage 1. However, these improvements are taking longer to have an impact at Key stage 2, where pupils' poorly developed writing skills hampers them in recording their findings and opinions. Leadership and management of the subject has not been consistent over the last year due to staff absence and so the monitoring of standards and quality of provision has been limited. The current action plan does not fully reflect what should be done to improve the subject, and raise pupil's achievement.

Geography

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 6 are satisfactory.

Commentary

63. In a well taught lesson Year 6 pupils demonstrate confidence in applying terms such as source, estuary, meander and erosion to their description of the course of a river. Higher achieving pupils are well challenged by the teacher and the classroom support assistant and such good teaching leads to good learning.
64. Records show that the coordinator has undertaken some monitoring of pupils' work but these do not underpin developments listed in the school's improvement plan. The plan does not evaluate its success by what pupils will be able to understand, know or be able to do as a result of the intended changes.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision is satisfactory in the infants, but unsatisfactory in the juniors. Standards are broadly average by age seven, but below average by age 11. Achievement varies across the school with the younger pupils making better progress, and satisfactory progress. In the early junior classes currently, pupils build on their previous learning and make satisfactory progress. Pupils in the upper juniors have not achieved as much as they could due to a legacy of underachievement from previous years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the infants, pupils build on the good creative skills developed in the Foundation Stage.
- These pupils make good progress in developing observational drawing skills.
- Good use of range of media and stimulus materials throughout the school.
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject and behave well.
- There is developing consistency in teachers' lesson planning.
- Some staff have good subject expertise.
- Standards are below expected levels for the current Year 6.
- Previous underachievement has affected these pupils' progress.
- Limited experience across the school of regular work in three dimensions and in working with textiles.
- Gaps in some teachers' subject knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

65. Pupils in the infants achieve satisfactory levels in a range of work in two dimensions involving line, pattern colour and form. They make good progress in observational drawing skills. They draw well, with a good understanding of line, and light and shade. The more talented pupils produce some very good work for their age. This is due to well-planned lessons, which gives the staff time and space to work closely with pupils and support them in developing their techniques.
66. In the juniors, analysis of pupils' work and sketchbooks shows that achievement is more varied between classes than in the infants, and in the different elements of art. In both lessons observed achievement was satisfactory, but despite satisfactory teaching now, by Year 6 pupils have not reached expected levels in drawing skills, for example. The curriculum is now more effectively planned than at the last inspection. There is now systematic teaching of a wide range of knowledge about art and better teaching of skills, but there are still some aspects that are not consistently well taught. An artist in residence worked with children on large-scale sculpture last year, but this was not enough to raise achievement in three-dimensional work sufficiently to meet what is expected by age 11.
67. Standards in art have improved in both key stages since the last inspection, especially by age seven. The children's work is improving from the Foundation Stage upward with pupils building on skills taught earlier. The full effects of this improvement in pupils' achievement have not reached Year 6 yet. There are still some weak aspects of the subject, including the use of sketch books to help assess and track pupil's progress in the development of skills, and the sharing of the good practice and artistic expertise from some staff to others. Leadership and management of the subject have improved to be satisfactory and most of the issues since the last inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. However, there has not been sufficient emphasis on raising standards by age 11, nor on monitoring the effectiveness of provision.

Design and technology

Provision is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy the subject and have positive attitudes towards designing and making.
 - Leadership and management is unsatisfactory.
68. There is not enough evidence to judge standards by ages seven and 11. In the only lesson seen in the juniors, standards were broadly as expected for the age and capabilities. In the infants, the evidence from a combined art, design and technology lesson indicated that pupils' making skills were appropriate for their ages and capabilities. Discussion with pupils both

before and during the inspection revealed that, whilst they enjoy the subject, they do not have enough opportunities to take part in practical activities. The quality of teaching in the two lessons seen was satisfactory but there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about teaching overall. The curriculum meets the minimum requirements but the subject has a low profile in the school and shares curriculum time with art. The subject does not have a designated curriculum leader and has not undergone any recent development. The present picture is very similar to that found at the last inspection and it appears that little attention has been given to improving the subject.

Music

Provision is satisfactory, an improvement since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 3 to 6 have improved and is now satisfactory, and standards are average by age 11.
- The coordinator has worked hard to build teachers' confidence in teaching music and consequently the range and quality of experiences now offered to pupils in lessons and before and after school has improved.
- Teaching is good in Years 1 to 2 and as a result achievement is good, and standards are above average.

Commentary

69. Year 2 pupils show a developing control of pitch, dynamics and rhythm in their enthusiastic singing. Teaching is good and pupils get a great deal of encouragement to participate, and engage with music and as a result can interpret sounds and rhythms well. The success of these pupils has been well built upon earlier work such as that seen in a Year 1 class where pupils are developing confidence in performing and appraising their own work and that of others.
70. Year 6 pupils have developed a good musical vocabulary and when comparing recordings of the *Brandenburg Concerto* with *The Four Seasons* most use terms such as 'texture', 'thin' and 'thick' 'timbre' accurately and most were able to identify 'metre in 4'. Planning shows that such skills and knowledge are gradually built up as pupils pass through the school. However, when pupils in Years 3 to 6 sing together, for example in assembly or hymn practice the result is disappointing. Not all pupils participate and the overall effect is restrained by the seated pupils looking down at their hymn books.
71. The coordinator has identified and met teachers' training needs, made sensible adjustments to the work planned for pupils to learn and purchased appropriate resources since the previous inspection. As a consequence provision has improved. A good variety of activities are planned for lessons, including exposure to the musical traditions of other cultures. The school choir performs locally and peripatetic music teachers give instruction in brass, woodwind, and string instruments.

Physical Education

Provision is satisfactory, but a legacy of underachievement means that Year 6 pupils achieve standards below those of which they are capable. Year 2 currently achieve as expected in dance and gymnastics.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Below average standards by Year 6, indicating unsatisfactory achievement.
- Good after-school clubs, and opportunities for adventurous activities during residential visit for older pupils.
- Good accommodation and outdoor playing facilities.

Commentary

72. The whole curriculum is covered, including swimming and adventurous pursuits in a residential visit for older pupils. Gymnastics lessons were observed in Year 6 and Year 2, and dance in Years 5 and 2. A class of Year 6 pupils also began a tennis course using new equipment, and there are good opportunities for after-school games and dance clubs, including hockey and line-dancing. There are also team games arranged against other schools in football and netball.
73. Given this interest, it is a pity that expectations of the current Year 6 pupils' achievement have clearly been too low in the past. For example, Year 2 pupils were more adventurous and initiated a wider range of gymnastic movements in developing a sequence than did Year 6 pupils. The Year 6 teacher attempted to inspire the pupils, but they did not have a confident repertoire to respond effectively to her prompts. However, most pupils attain the expected levels in swimming by age 11.
74. The quality of teaching seen was satisfactory overall, with some good teaching in the infants. All the pupils behaved well, and tried hard to follow the teachers' or taped instructions, and most made the effort to improve. For example, Year 5 pupils listened to a prepared tape, and took the rituals of a warrior seriously in developing strong and fierce movements in pairs. Similarly, Year 2 pupils used the apparatus set out for them enthusiastically, vigorously, but carefully. A very good illustration of how the school's high expectations influence pupils' behaviour occurred in a Year 1/2 dance session. A girl cried out as she was stung on the neck by a wasp: the teacher and assistant dealt with the situation skilfully, and all the pupils responded very well, including the girl stung.
75. The subject has been fairly low key in recent years. There are good resources, including two halls, good playgrounds, and wide grassed play areas. The staff need further development of the subject profile, and higher expectations of pupils' attainment and achievement by age 11.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	5
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	5
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
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	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	5
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	5
The effectiveness of management	5

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