

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST. PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Ladywood, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103439

Headteacher: Mr. Gerry Hickey

Lead inspector: Hugh Protherough

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Inspection number: 257901

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	187
School address:	Dudley Rd. Birmingham
Postcode:	B18 7QW
Telephone number:	0121 454 0767
Fax number:	0121 452 2008
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Canon Anthony Piercy
Date of previous inspection:	21 <sup>st</sup> September 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

This small Catholic primary school has 187 pupils on roll from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. The largest group is Black British Caribbean (93 pupils), with significant representation from White (33 pupils), mixed White Black Caribbean (20 pupils), and Black British African (14 pupils). Although most pupils speak English at home, there are four pupils at an early stage of English acquisition who speak either French or Urdu. The school serves an inner city area that contains high levels of social and economic deprivation. This is reflected in the significant proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the high levels of pupil mobility. Although many of the children entering the reception class have had some pre-school experience at one of the local playgroups or nurseries, a significant number have not. The levels of attainment on entry cover the full range, but taken overall are well below average. Around a quarter of the pupils have been assessed as having special educational needs including three with statements of special educational needs. The school is increasingly popular. Numbers are rising lower down the school and the current reception year is almost at capacity.

The school received an Achievement Award in 2001 and is involved in the following national initiatives; Excellence in Cities, Single Regeneration Budget, Sure Start.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8339	Hugh Protherough	Lead inspector	Science, information and communication technology, English as an additional language
32660	Bob Adams	Lay inspector	
19387	Mari Powell	Team inspector	English, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education
33168	Tracey Sharkey	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, special educational needs, mathematics, geography and history

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school is reasonably effective.** Despite socially challenging surroundings and the high turnover of pupils, the quality of education provided is sound and the vast majority of the children are achieving satisfactorily. The school is an inclusive and generally harmonious community where the pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and behave well. However, there are serious weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school. Taken overall the school offers satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Significant aspects of the leadership and management of the school lack coherence and rigour
- The learning mentor provides strong and effective support for both teachers and pupils that enhances the school's ethos
- Teaching is frequently good in the Reception class and Year 2
- The poor attendance and frequent lateness of many of the lower attaining pupils limit their achievements and depress the school's results in the national tests
- The curriculum lacks balance
- The provision for pupils with special needs is well managed and helps them to achieve well
- The pupils are insufficiently involved in planning school development

The school has made reasonable improvement since the last inspection. Although standards at age eleven continue to be well below the national average, results in the national tests have risen in line with the national trend and inspection evidence shows that the pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Since the previous inspection the provision for the pupils in the Foundation Stage has improved considerably and is now good. The school continues to encounter difficulties in recruiting governors, but those in post are now working satisfactorily.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

**Taken overall the pupils are achieving satisfactorily.** They enter the school with levels of attainment that are generally well below average. The Foundation Stage children currently in the Reception class are achieving well and standards are improving. In recent years the standards achieved by pupils in the Year 2 national tests have declined sharply. However, inspection findings indicate that within the current cohort pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are achieving satisfactorily and that standards in reading, writing and mathematics although currently well below the national average, are now rising.

There are seldom more than two thirds of the pupils taking the national tests as eleven-year-olds who were attending the school at the age of seven, and this year there are even fewer. Last year slightly more than 80% had been at the school since Year 2, but a significant number had special educational needs. Standards in English, mathematics and science were below the national average, but when compared with the data for similar schools, were below average in mathematics and well below average in English and science. Inspection findings indicate that although standards are well below average in English and below average in mathematics, the current Year 6 pupils achieve satisfactorily and that those with special educational needs achieve well. With the exception of information and communication technology, pupils achieve satisfactorily in other subjects.

Taken overall the **pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good**. The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to work, are polite to visitors and behave well in lessons and around the school. However, attendance is poor, and there are significant amounts of unauthorised absence and poor punctuality amongst the lowest attaining African Caribbean and White pupils.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The **quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory** and the **teaching is sound**. The improved teaching in the reception class is now frequently good because the teacher provides an interesting variety of learning experiences across the full breadth of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Each day is thoughtfully planned to include activities that enable the children to make choices as they play and learn together, as well as occasional, short, formal lessons that are effectively preparing the children for work in Year 1.

Taken overall, the teaching in Years 1-6 is satisfactory. The pupils learn best in Year 2 where the teacher's thorough knowledge of the children and her careful planning result in lessons that are consistently challenging and well matched to the pupils' abilities. Elsewhere the teaching is generally secure and occasionally good in literacy and numeracy. However, there remains a small amount of occasionally unsatisfactory teaching. The school's curriculum has reasonable breadth, but lacks balance because teaching is weighted heavily towards the core subjects. Although a few families are strongly supportive of the school, a sizeable majority finds it difficult to sustain a true educational partnership that will benefit their children's learning. There are few formal mechanisms by which the staff can consult with the pupils and involve them in developing the work of the school.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Taken overall, the **leadership and management are unsatisfactory**. The headteacher's caring, pastoral leadership is not providing strong and effective enough management across the entire staff team to ensure consistent good quality teaching and accelerate still further the rate of school improvement. There are good foundations in the dynamic leadership of Key Stage 1 and special educational needs. However, curriculum leadership is haphazard because of a lack of a common understanding of what the job entails and insufficient checks to ensure that co-ordinators' evaluations are backed by reliable evidence. With the exception of one or two minor omissions, the governing body fulfil their responsibilities soundly.

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

Both parents and children express reasonable satisfaction with the work of the school. Many parents would like more frequent information about their children's progress.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Establish a greater rigour in the leadership and management of the school that focuses firmly on the outcomes of provision, not good intentions
- Increase attendance and improve punctuality
- Improve pupils' achievement in ICT
- Review the balance of the school's curriculum
- Devise ways in which the pupils can be more involved in planning school development

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure the governing body formally adopts its draft policies for Sex Education and Drugs Awareness



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Standards in all core subjects are well below the national average and the performance of girls in the national tests generally outstrips that of the boys. However, taken overall the pupils in Years 1 – 6 achieve satisfactorily and achievement in the Foundation Stage is good.

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

- The children in the reception class are achieving well, especially in their personal, social and emotional and physical development
- Standards in Year 2 are starting to rise again and the pupils make good progress
- The school's published targets are unrealistic
- The pupils with special educational needs are making good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans

#### **Commentary**

1. A key feature of the challenging circumstances facing the school is the extremely high level of pupil mobility. For example, 40 per cent of last year's Year 6 arrived at the school after Year 1. This year there are only nine such pupils. The pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and there is a high percentage with a variety of special educational needs. Arriving at any meaningful analysis of the school's test and assessment data is a complex process and the school's own systems for evaluating pupils' progress are at an early stage of development.
2. The achievements of the children entering the reception class cover a wide range, but are generally much lower than usual because a significant proportion has had little or no formal pre-school experience. Since September a new teacher has done a good job in settling the children into the routines of school. As a result, a good proportion of the pupils are reaching the expected targets in their personal, social and emotional, and physical development. Although fewer pupils are reaching the targets in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development, the vast majority are achieving well because the teaching of all the adults motivates them to work hard and play co-operatively throughout each day. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	13.6 (12.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	11.4 (12.5)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	13.9 (13.9)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 21 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. Over the past three years the results achieved by the pupils in the Year 2 national tests have been in steep decline; a pattern identified by the inspection team as a cause for concern and for detailed investigation during the inspection. One significant barrier to progress was the succession of temporary and part-time teachers working in Year 1 during that period. The

frequent changes of personnel meant that a considerable proportion of each class started Year 2 at levels lower than they should be. It is also significant that over a third of each cohort contains pupils who are identified on the school's register for special educational needs. The majority of these are boys, and this provides further insight into why the girls appear to achieve better in the tests than the boys. Even so, the well organised support for these pupils means they are making good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans. Inspection findings show that this year there will be an upturn in the Year 2 results. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are likely to remain well below the national average because there are very few higher attaining pupils capable of exceeding the expected level. However, as a result of committed and effective teaching, several children have made significant gains in the course of the past year and may nudge into the lower bands of the expected level 2, which would represent a considerable achievement. The tragedy of this situation is that it is almost always these lower attaining pupils, most of whom are White or Afro Caribbean, who are either late to school or who have poor attendance records.

4. The appointment of a permanent, full time teacher in Year 1 has stabilised staffing and has led to a productive working relationship between the two teachers who form the Year 1-2 team. Inspection findings show that the Year 1 pupils are now making steadier progress and offer a good basis for further improvement in the pupils' achievements in the Year 2 tests in subsequent years.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.9 (25.2)	26.8 (27)
mathematics	25.9 (26.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	27.8 (26.8)	28.6 (28.3)

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

5. The improvement in Year 6 test results over the past three years has kept pace with the national trend. Last year standards in English, mathematics and science were below the national average, but were above average when compared with the results of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. However, the value added comparisons based on such pupils' prior attainment indicate below average gains. The current Year 6 is small and a half of the pupils have joined the school in the past four years. The school's published targets are wildly over optimistic and inspection findings indicate that, with a third of the pupils on the special needs register, standards are likely to fall. However, the discussions with pupils and the analysis of their work indicate that they are achieving satisfactorily and have progressed steadily over the course of the past year.
6. One of the most significant weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school is that it has only just begun to record and analyse test and assessment data in a systematic fashion. Prior to the inspection there had been little analysis of results by either gender or ethnicity. Although the numbers in each group are small, the data print out provided during the inspection raises important questions for the school to consider if it is to accelerate further the pupils' achievements, especially those of the White and Afro-Caribbean boys many of whom have special educational needs, but whose aggregated test results are consistently lower than those of their female counterparts.

7. The analysis of work and the few lessons observed in other subjects indicate that the pupils achieve adequately in them in the time currently allowed. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in information and communications technology. The use of ICT skills throughout the school is unsatisfactory and the computer suite is underused.

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

Taken overall, the pupils’ personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to work, are polite to visitors and behave well in lessons and around the school. However, attendance and punctuality are poor.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to school
- Behaviour is generally good
- There are significant amounts of unauthorised absence and poor punctuality, particularly amongst White and Afro-Caribbean pupils
- The staff effectively support the children’s social and moral development
- Children’s all round personal development is carefully nurtured by the work of the learning mentor

### **Commentary**

8. The pupils are given considerable support to encourage them to behave well and to engage positively with their work. Over time they are improving their concentration skills and are generally orderly in the way they settle to work and move around the school. They are polite towards visitors and very willing to engage in conversation. The pupils make a good effort to present their work well and welcome lessons where they are challenged. A few older pupils were of the opinion that at times they would welcome further opportunities to undertake more independent, open-ended work. The inspectors agree with this point of view.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.2	School data	2.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

9. Attendance and punctuality have improved very slightly since the last inspection, but are still poor. There is a significant amount of unauthorised absence among Afro-Caribbean and White pupils that includes many of the lowest attainers. This has a negative effect on the progress of the pupils who would benefit most from being in school and limits their achievements. The school is struggling to improve things. There is a breakfast club each morning and a variety of after school activities each day. Registers are taken promptly and records of lateness and absence carefully recorded. However, a significant proportion of parents and carers demonstrate continually casual attitudes towards their responsibilities for getting children to and from school each day. Despite good links with the Educational Social Worker (ESW), the amount of time available to follow up persistent offenders is small. In liaison with the ESW a new approach is being planned for the autumn that will include phone calls to parents on the first day of unexplained absence.

10. The adults and pupils relate well to each other. The learning support assistants and learning mentor do much to raise the pupils' self-esteem and develop a committed attitude to learning. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds co-operate well with each other. The behaviour policy, as well as promoting a consistent system of rewards such as the "happy faces" chart, encourages a positive approach to overall school and classroom rules. A recent significant success has been the decision taken by the headteacher to appoint a young, male Afro-Caribbean learning support assistant to work alongside some of the most challenging pupils in Year 5. This is working well because the assistant knows these young men well, inside and outside school. He has high expectations of them and there is an evident mutual respect that is contributing to better relationships in class and faster learning. The incidence of temporary exclusions is now reducing.

***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	33	1	0
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	20	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	2	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	7	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	93	2	0
Black or Black British – African	14	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

11. There is good provision for pupils' moral and social development. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory overall. The school effectively promotes Catholic values, but much more could be done to celebrate the rich variety of cultural traditions and ethnic heritage within the school, which are under-represented in the curricula for history, art and music. Even so, the school successfully prepares the pupils for life in a multi-ethnic society. Pupils act as monitors for registers and take pride in being elected to represent their class in a playground mediation scheme. This is a positive feature of the overall harmony that exists in the playground. It also serves to increase the pupils' sense of responsibility. The pupils are now ready to undertake a greater range of responsibilities that would enable their voices to be heard in a wider range of school initiatives. Some of the Year 6 pupils, for example, on an individual basis, read stories to the Reception class. This is an experience enjoyed by all concerned. The fact that the children in this class respond so well is due in part to the fact that their personal development is very skilfully handled during the Foundation Stage.

The staff of the school is very committed to the pastoral aspect of school life and makes considerable efforts to create a harmonious community.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

Taken overall, the school provides a satisfactory quality of education.

### **Teaching and learning**

With the exception of the use made of assessment, which is unsatisfactory, teaching is sound overall and all pupils are learning reasonably effectively.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Inconsistent approaches to teacher assessment lead to a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is often good
- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support learning and the effective integration of those with special educational needs
- Too many undemanding worksheets dull the pupils' appetite for learning
- Most pupils work hard and have good relationships with their teachers

### **Commentary**

12. As a result of the considerable improvements in the management of the pupils' behaviour, classrooms are quiet, orderly and generally well disciplined. Almost all of the pupils are well behaved and show a genuine eagerness to work hard and learn. The best teaching observed during the inspection took place in those classrooms where there was a sense of fun, enjoyment and a mutual respect between adults and children.
13. The new teacher in the reception class is doing a good job in establishing clear expectations for the children to learn how to work and play together sociably. She provides a good variety of relevant activities for the children to choose from, and often ensures that there are clear thematic links that reinforce learning. For instance, after hearing the story of "Handa's surprise" the pupils played the roles of shopkeeper and customers in a fruit shop and fished for letters to practise spelling the names of different types of fruit. A further strength is steadily increasing demand that pupils learn to spend part of each day in more formal learning situations, in preparation for the National Curriculum in Year 1. The children are clearly happy in this class and are always eager to approach visitors to share their work. A strong ethos for learning is being successfully cultivated.
14. Teaching was also of consistently good quality in Year 2. The teacher has high expectations of the children, both in terms of their behaviour and their approach to work. Although her manner can sometimes appear brusque, close observation and conversations with the children reveal genuine warmth of relationships and frequent flashes of humour that reflect her very good knowledge of the individuals within the class. In the opening of a numeracy lesson pupils of all backgrounds and abilities were given questions that were cleverly matched to their capability. Higher attaining pupils showed confidence in mental calculations involving the doubling of two-digit numbers, whilst lower attainers worked hard with smaller numbers. Group work activities provided further evidence of the teacher's thorough knowledge of the children because the level of challenge for each group was just right and the pupils worked diligently and successfully throughout.

15. Although the vast majority of lessons observed during the inspection were of at least satisfactory quality, there continues to be a small proportion of teaching that is not good enough. On each occasion the teacher did not provide work that was sufficiently well matched to the pupils' abilities. For instance, in a Year 1 English lesson three groups of pupils were set mundane tasks and soon lost concentration and motivation. Similarly in a Year 4 mathematics lesson the vast majority of pupils found the task of adding a pair of two digit numbers far too easy. The inconsistency in the quality of teachers' approaches to assessing pupils is closely associated with this lack of challenge in some lessons. This is best exemplified by the marking of the children's work that ranges from very good to poor. In the best examples, such as Year 2, the teacher provides a thorough and persuasive commentary on the nature and context of the child's work as well as messages for the child that praise good work and suggest improvements for the future. Elsewhere, especially in parts of Years 3 to 6 the marking lacks the necessary depth and rigour. The teachers have recently started to complete end of term assessments of each pupil that are to be passed on to the next teacher. However, the subject leaders and senior management team have not yet established systems for checking the quality of these assessments nor the ways in which this information can be utilised to provide a convincing account of individual and group progress that can be disseminated among the staff team.
  
16. Throughout the school the teachers make effective use of the good number of additional adults employed as learning support assistants. These assistants come from a variety of backgrounds and several have useful assets, such as good experience of working with young children or ICT skills. They are frequently deployed to support the many pupils with special educational needs and their good knowledge of the needs of these pupils is a significant factor in the good progress made by many.
  
17. There were no very good lessons observed during the inspection. This is in part due to the tight structure of the vast majority of lessons observed. Despite pupils' positive attitudes, the work they are provided with is frequently dull and too often comprises worksheets that provide little or no opportunity for independent study. Conversations with some of the oldest pupils revealed that, while they are happy to work hard, many found their lessons boring, a fact reflected by the pupil questionnaire returns. Although they spoke with enthusiasm about many subjects of the National Curriculum, they felt that more interesting work and activities, such as physical education and ICT, occur too infrequently.

***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	16	10	3	0	0

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

**The curriculum**

Taken overall, the school's curriculum and opportunities for enrichment are satisfactory. The curriculum currently provides a range of worthwhile activities, but lacks balance. The quality of accommodation and resources is satisfactory.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The balance of the curriculum focuses too much upon English and mathematics at the expense of other subjects

- The Foundation Stage curriculum is much improved
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good
- The match of support staff to pupils' needs is good

### **Commentary**

18. Although the school's curriculum covers the requirements of the National Curriculum in full, the current arrangements are unbalanced. The understandable focus on English, mathematics, science and religious education has led to less than thorough coverage of some other areas of the curriculum, especially amongst the non-core subjects. The teachers are making intelligent use of national guidance and curriculum framework plans, but conversations with the pupils and an analysis of their work shows that the coverage in Years 3 to 6 of subjects such as history, geography, art and music too often lacks depth and progression and too seldom exploits the rich cultural backgrounds of the pupils. Insufficient use is made of the power of computers and new technologies to support learning across the curriculum.
19. There has been considerable improvement in the way that the Foundation Stage curriculum is planned and delivered. The teacher makes intelligent use of the national guidance for Foundation Stage curriculum planning, and this has improved the provision. The curriculum is well organised and appropriate for young children because it takes full account of their learning needs. Each of the six areas of learning is covered in sufficient depth and the children achieve well.
20. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), especially in helping them to develop better skills, knowledge and understanding in literacy and numeracy. Individual plans of work are closely matched to pupils' special needs and are regularly reviewed to ensure the pupils receive the learning support they need. Good use is made of the advice provided by a variety of outside agencies such as educational psychologists as a direct result of the positive links fostered by the school. Pupils with SEN are fully included in all aspects of the school's life. This makes a positive contribution to their self-esteem and explains why they frequently achieve well. The learning support staff are used effectively to support pupils' needs and contribute significantly to their achievement. They are well supported by the good leadership and management of the special needs coordinator who has organised appropriate training to enhance their effectiveness.

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

The school makes sound provision for the pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Taken overall the support, advice and guidance for pupils is satisfactory. However, the school does not sufficiently involve the pupils in planning for future improvement.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The management of child protection procedures is good
- There is a good induction programme for children entering the reception class
- The work of the learning mentor ensures good levels of personal support and guidance for the pupils
- There are few formal mechanisms by which the staff can consult with the pupils and involve them in developing the work of the school

### **Commentary**

21. Apart from one health and safety issue that has been drawn to the attention of the governors and senior management team the school takes its duty of care very seriously and the staff work

conscientiously to ensure that the children feel safe and secure. All of the younger pupils and almost all older children who responded to the pupil questionnaire said they could identify an adult to turn to and this view was subsequently confirmed when the inspectors spoke with groups of pupils. The headteacher attends regular training in his role as the person responsible for child protection and there are regular updates for all staff. Even the dance club teacher who only visits school to run the club has attended a days training on child protection and has good knowledge of the expected procedures.

22. Despite the wide variety of pre-school experiences and settings, the school's induction for new pupils and their parents is good. The children entering the reception class are invited into school in the term before they start full time education. Parents and carers are encouraged to visit the reception class with their children in order to spend time with them in their new environment and to learn themselves about the school and its ethos. These events also provide valuable opportunities for the staff to find out a little more about the new children's interests, aptitudes and needs
23. Other pupils arriving throughout the year are inducted by the headteacher who spends time with each individual and their families in order to find out as much information as possible to support their smooth entry to school. He is effectively supported by the learning mentor, who works with class teachers to provide good support to new pupils. In more complex cases she also works with parents and carers to support pupils who present special needs or more complex social and emotional difficulties. The learning mentor is also a driving force behind many welfare and pupil support events in the school. She helps arrange and manage the Inspire workshop days with teachers. These workshops give parents and carers twice yearly opportunities to spend time in their child's class. Parents who attended reported that they derived great benefit and learnt skills to support their child with homework.
24. The learning mentor also manages the pupil-peer mediators. Following their training the mediators are responsible for the first line management of minor issues for pupils, especially during breaks and lunchtimes. Pupils throughout the school know who these children are and provide many vivid accounts of the mediators resolving problems between children who have fallen out with each other. As part of their training each mentor has been taken to another school that already runs a peer mediator project. This has proved highly popular and is one of the very few links this school has with other schools that pupils could identify as particularly helpful to them. These types of development have clearly had a significant impact on the pupils and their willingness to accept wider responsibility around the school. Although some adults in the school say that pupils are involved in school development planning, the pupils are not able to recall this or to provide details of other ways that the pupils are being consulted. The inspectors' conversations with pupils of all ages reveal that many children have strong and constructive views about their school, not least about how the quality of their learning experiences might be improved. The lack of clear systems by which the pupils can be consulted is an important area for improvement.

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

The school has satisfactory links with parents and the local community. There is adequate liaison with other schools and early years providers.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The work of the learning mentor is supporting better links between home and school



- Inspire workshops are providing a useful springboard for a more dynamic educational partnership for the small number of parents who attend
- A minority of parents fail to support the school's attempts to improve punctuality and attendance
- Many parents want more frequent information specific to their own child

## **Commentary**

25. The transient nature of much of the school population and the challenging socio-economic features of the local area frequently inhibit the school's attempts to develop a dynamic educational partnership. Governors and school managers report the reluctance of many parents to participate in school life. There have been several attempts to start a parent and teachers association but each has faltered after a few weeks. Even so, there have also been some notable successes.
26. The appointment of a learning mentor to support pupils experiencing difficulties either at school or at home is developing into a major strength. Many parents commented on the high quality relationships that have developed between their children and the mentor. Many others commented upon how easy it is to approach and speak with her of any concerns or complaints. The children speak positively about her work and many have responded positively to the opportunity to be trained as a peer mediator. As a result breaks are more peaceful and the children are developing a better understanding of how to cope with difference of opinion.
27. Offers by school staff to run Inspire workshops twice each year receive a mixed response. The purpose of the meetings is to demonstrate to parents and carers the sorts of purposeful learning activities that happen in school and that can be developed further at home. Attendance is generally best in the classes containing the younger children. Those who attended the Inspire workshop during the inspection said that they derived great benefit, learning new methods of communication with their child, and a greater understanding of how their child learns and works in school. Several reported this was a great aid to them at home when considering how best to support their children.
28. At the other extreme is the small but significant number of parents and carers who fail repeatedly either to get their children to school on a regular basis, or on time. Poor punctuality causes disruption to teaching and learning in most classrooms on most mornings and distracts staff at the end of the school day from preparation work or meetings when the adults are late collecting their children.
29. Many of the parents who spoke to inspectors reported that the quality of general information about school life is good, but that more detailed information about individual pupil's progress is harder to establish. Although the overwhelming majority of parents find the headteacher approachable, the requirement to make formal appointments to see the teachers is not regarded as helpful, especially when some parents and carers have had experience of regular informal contact with staff at other schools. The teachers' annual reports on the pupils' progress meet requirements, but vary considerably in the amount of useful detail provided.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory. Despite the good pastoral leadership of the headteacher, there is insufficient focus on developing the consistent approaches to management that will raise standards. With the exception of a couple of minor omissions, the governing body fulfils its responsibilities soundly.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The approaches to leadership and management lack rigour
- The analysis of school performance and planning for improvement focus too much on provision and not enough on pupils' performance
- The roles and responsibilities of the subject leaders are poorly defined
- The leadership and management of Key Stage 1 and special educational needs are good

## Commentary

30. Despite the demanding social context of the school, the headteacher is most successful in the way that he promotes a caring, Catholic ethos through his strong personal example. Early each morning he is on hand to talk with the children attending the breakfast club, or to chivvy with a friendly word the many pupils who arrive late. Each afternoon it is the headteacher who frequently waits with the considerable number of pupils whose parents or carers arrive late to collect them after the end of school. Relationships between headteacher, staff and governors are cordial and harmonious.
31. However, the headteacher's leadership in accelerating school improvement is currently unsatisfactory because his expectations of the staff team are not always clearly defined and he does not evaluate teaching and learning thoroughly enough to be sure that pupils are making sufficient progress. For instance, the approaches to the collection and use of test and assessment data have, until recently, lacked coherence. The teachers have been recording their own informal assessments of individual pupils and their results in tests, and these are now being collated and passed up through the school from teacher to teacher. However, the overall analysis of the school's performance by the senior management team is not yet looking in sufficient detail at the performance of different groups of pupils in order to move forward faster improvement. For instance, what is the story behind the figures that suggest White and Afro-Caribbean boys appear on average to do worse than the girls and what can be done about it? What is the value added by each teacher over the course of a school year to the performance of the children in their class?
32. The effects of these shortcomings can be seen in the approach taken to school improvement planning. This year's plan sets out a good range of activities on a number of important fronts, but spans only a twelve-month period. The majority of the actions listed are to do with improving aspects of the school's provision; the purchase of additional equipment and resources or the review of policy. However, beyond an assertion that these improvements will "ultimately result in improved pupils' attainment," there are few clear indications as to how this is to be achieved or measured. The school's self-evaluation for the inspection includes mention of several issues to be included in subsequent improvement plans, but there is no document that sets out a tentative framework to ensure the regular review of all aspects of school management every two to three years, nor any indication of how the current plan relates to last year's work.
33. A further weakness lies in the divergent approaches taken by each co-ordinator to the management of their responsibilities. Some are highly organised and effective, others are not. For instance, the leadership and management of Years 1 and 2, including oversight of the Foundation Stage and special educational needs, are good and developing well. The co-ordinator responded positively to the challenging hypotheses in the pre-inspection commentary and provided the inspectors with a healthy range of valuable evidence that demonstrated the good progress that has been made in improving the quality of teaching and helping the children to achieve more. In sharp contrast, the co-ordinator for mathematics and science was unable to

articulate a clear view of the development of her subjects, or provide an accurate assessment of standards across the school.

34. Since the recent promotion of a senior member of staff to an assistant headship, the headteacher carries a heavy load of subject responsibility additional to his key role as lead professional, including ICT, music and geography. He has correctly identified his strongest teachers and most competent managers. However, he is insufficiently assertive in ensuring that the information gleaned from work trawls and the observation of lessons is well focussed and used properly to raise the profile of school management and to eliminate all unsatisfactory teaching.

*Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	£550,670
Total expenditure	£571,108
Expenditure per pupil	£3,461

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	£40,966
Balance carried forward to the next	£20,528

35. The school's generous funding reflects its demanding circumstances. The budget is used prudently and a sound start has been made to introducing the principles of best value.

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

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

36. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and has improved considerably since the previous inspection.
37. Children start in September before they are five. Most children have some pre-school experience in local nurseries and playgroups but a significant number do not. When children start school their basic skills are well below those expected for their age. By the time they leave the reception classes they achieve standards below those expected in most areas of learning. This represents good progress. Pupils do even better in their personal, social and emotional and physical development in which a good number are achieving the expected goals.
38. Children achieve well because of good teaching and a well-planned curriculum that provides a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities and is well matched to their learning needs. The teacher and support assistant work well together, ensuring that children are thoroughly involved in the activities provided. The provision for children with special educational needs is good and children have access to the full curriculum. Staff work consistently to implement carefully planned individual programmes of support. However, assessment procedures generally are informal and do not provide detailed information on children's learning in all areas of the curriculum. This hinders evaluations of the effectiveness of the provision provided.
39. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. Improvement in this area since the previous inspection is good.

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

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

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

- Good relationships are developed with all children
- Quality of teaching is good and pupils achieve well
- Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour

#### **Commentary**

40. This is an area of strength. A small majority of the pupils are on course to achieve the expected goals. The teacher and learning support assistant are very supportive and caring towards children and strong relationships are established. As a result, children are confident to approach new activities and keen to share their work with those present including the inspectors. Teaching is good and children achieve well. Developing children's independence and self-esteem are skilfully woven into all aspects of the classroom life. For example, following a very exciting but messy afternoon session, the classroom was restored to order in minutes by independent, purposeful and busy children who knew where everything was kept. Children's behaviour is very good because staff are consistent in their approach and children are clear about what is expected of them. Classroom rules and routines are explained regularly, and enable those children with underdeveloped social skills to quickly learn the correct way to behave. The adults in the classroom work cooperatively together, acting as good role models

and encouraging children to do the same. For example, three children worked closely together finding letters in the water tray. When this task was complete they jointly decided to play with the cars. This happy collaboration continued for some time.

## **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good and children achieve well
- Good opportunities are provided for speaking and listening
- The teaching of letter sounds is strongly emphasised

### **Commentary**

41. The teacher provides a good balance between lively, well-focused whole class sessions and rich opportunities for children to practise the skills taught while they play. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected goals in early literacy is lower than usual. In preparation for Year 1 more able children have opportunities to work more formally for short periods of time. This is helping to develop concentration and has been effective in developing their letter formation and ability to write simple words. The class fruit shop is well used and children produced labels for the fruit, supported by the learning support assistant. The development of children's speaking and listening skills is strongly emphasised, often through good questioning and encouraging children's observations. For example, the teacher used the introduction of a new computer programme effectively to stimulate a discussion about dressing and the children's morning routines. There is a good balance between opportunities for incidental chat and more structured teacher led discussions. In these situations the class teddy bear is used to encourage children to listen to others in the class - only the person holding the bear can speak. Staff are patient and wait for children to complete what they have to say. This reassures the more reluctant children and they have a go. Children have frequent opportunities to practise letter recognition and many children know the sounds of the letters of the alphabet and they are beginning to use this knowledge in their reading. Less able children and those with special educational needs achieve well through encouragement and carefully focused support from both the teacher and the learning support assistant.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Children's counting skills are well developed
- Good links are made with other areas of learning to reinforce mathematical development
- Some activities are too hard for the children

### **Commentary**

42. Teaching is good overall and children make good progress. The most able children are likely to reach the standard expected for their age. There are frequent opportunities for children to practise their

counting skills. Activities are interesting and capture the children's imagination. Songs, rhymes and chanting are used in a fun way to reinforce counting to ten. The teacher is skilful in developing mathematical skills through other curriculum areas. During the retelling of the book of the week children responded with enthusiasm to questions about how many pieces of fruit were left after a naughty monkey had taken one. Children use the computer with confidence to support their number work and the programmes available are well matched to their learning needs. For example, a group of children successfully ordered number tiles to ten and when asked could they start from ten and work backwards they did so confidently and accurately. However, although most activities were appropriate for the ability of the children some activities were too hard and were drawn from the infant curriculum. It was clear that most children found this work too difficult.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A good range of activities is provided based on first hand experiences and observations
- Teaching is good and encourages children to explore, observe and discuss their findings
- Children's computer skills are good

### **Commentary**

43. Teaching is good and children achieve well. Staff help children to observe and communicate their findings. The teacher used unusual and exotic fruits and vegetables to encourage children to use their senses to explore similarities and differences. Children did not recognise the lychee fruit but looked closely and handled the fruit describing it as "spiky". The teacher developed this further by describing the "red, juicy mango". The class grocer's shop is well used to support this area of learning and gives children the first hand opportunity to explore and examine a wide range of interesting fruit and vegetables while they play. Teaching of computer skills is good. There is a good balance between formal teaching sessions and opportunities for its practical use. Many children understand the need for the "Cap lock" and this was later applied when a child needed to save his work and independently used a capital letter for his name. Children can use the mouse and the pointer well and were able to "drag" items across the screen to dress teddy and to then tidy up the screen when they had finished placing all the items carefully in the screen cupboard.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in physical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good
- Fine motor skills are well taught
- Outdoor play opportunities are too limited

### **Commentary**

44. Teaching is good and children achieve well. Most children are in line to meet the standards expected for their age. The teacher and learning support assistant are fully active during movement lessons and show children exactly what to do. This ensures that children are active

straight away and make the most of the lesson. Children are well coordinated and travel with control showing a good awareness of the space available. The teacher frequently brings their attention back to the need for control, coordination and safety. Most children were able to change themselves for physical education, managing most fastenings except some very stiff collar buttons.

45. In the classroom they are taught well how to use tools such as pencils, glue sticks, scissors and paintbrushes safely. They use them effectively and with increased accuracy. In the afternoon in the outdoor area children run, skip, jump, ride trikes and use small apparatus and rockers well. This area is not available in the morning as reception share their playtime and area with the infants. There is not enough opportunity for children to develop these skills and there is no area for children to develop their climbing and balancing skills. The outside area is dull and tatty and is not a stimulating environment for young children.

## **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Provision in creative development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Materials are well organised and easily accessible and enable pupils to undertake work independently
- Music making and singing is widely encouraged
- High quality role-play gives children opportunities to develop their imagination

### **Commentary**

46. Teaching is good and children achieve well. A wide range of activities is carefully planned to develop children's creativity. They ably paint, construct, shape and model. Creative development is well used to support other curriculum areas. For example, children painted fruit to decorate the grocer's shop. The teacher encouraged them to look carefully at the fruit before painting them.
47. Role-play is well planned. For example, the shop is being developed gradually with children involved at every stage. This is appropriate, as many children need a lot of support in developing their imagination through play. Music making is encouraged and well taught. Children have regular opportunities to sing simple songs, play percussion instruments and respond to action and number rhymes. Even so, few pupils are likely to achieve the expected goals.

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2**

### **ENGLISH**

The provision for English is **satisfactory** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Handwriting and presentation of work are good and writing is beginning to improve

- Pupils with special educational needs are achieving well and acquiring basic skills of reading and writing
- Teaching is very structured but various elements of literacy are not always sufficiently integrated to encourage greater fluency in speaking or writing
- Assessment is not consistent enough to help improve the standards of pupils' writing

## Commentary

48. The provision for English is currently under review as the staff have identified the need to generate a more consistent and coherent approach to the development of the pupils' literacy skills. In comparison with the national picture standards are currently well below average at the end of both Years 2 and 6, but the analysis of the pupils' work shows that most are achieving satisfactorily. The support provided for pupils with special education needs is particularly successful in ensuring that these pupils often make good progress against the targets in their individual education plans.
49. The pupils' speaking skills are not yet sufficiently developed to provide a secure basis for the development of writing. However, most pupils listen attentively and make a good effort to respond to the teachers' questioning, for example, about the texts they are reading. The development of speaking and listening skills has been identified as a priority in the School Improvement Plan for 2004-2005. Teachers recognise that pupils need considerable support to develop a greater range of vocabulary to enable them to engage in wider discussion. When given the opportunity, a small group of pupils in Year 6 talked coherently about their attitudes to school life. During a well-paced lesson in Year 2, where the pupils listened keenly to the teacher's questioning, their responses were to the point and delivered with very clear diction. In that instance, they were achieving well.
50. The teachers have set targets for pupils' attainment in writing. They also regularly track pupils' progress. Each piece of writing is marked but there is room for greater consistency in the way work is assessed, especially across classes in Years 3 to 6. At times, the comments at the end of pieces of writing do not provide sufficient information about how pupils could improve. Where there is clear identification of what the individual pupil needs to improve upon as, for example, in Year 2, their achievement in subsequent work is improved. The quality and range of the writing of many pupils, although still well below average, nevertheless provides evidence that these areas are receiving attention. The older pupils, in particular, are increasingly encouraged to draft and re-draft work but the necessary skills are not yet well established. Computers are underused for this purpose.
51. Pupils' handwriting and presentation are good. In Years 1 and 2, the use of a commercial scheme is resulting in consistent, neatly formed letter shapes and appropriate spacing of words. The older pupils are encouraged to write legibly and to set out their work neatly.
52. The teachers are keenly aware of the pupils' low levels of language skills and conscientiously provide regular opportunities for reading and writing. The learning support assistants know the pupils well and are an invaluable resource for individual and small group help. A strong awareness of inclusion securely underpins the positive relationships between boys and girls and different ethnic groups. Where teachers work with their class to model pieces of writing, the pupils make very positive progress in developing the quality of their language.
53. In some classes, the various elements of literacy are not sufficiently integrated so that, for example, activities that focus on punctuation or sentence structure are directly linked to a piece



of written work. At times, the volume of work based on language exercises is not conducive to developing greater fluency in writing. The pupils' spelling is below average but the pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making satisfactory progress in spelling frequently used words.

54. The reading skills of many pupils are average. The teaching of reading by the end of Year 2 is systematic, so that all the pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. However, in Years 3 to 6 there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to use their reading skills to support work, for example, in history. The pupils value a recent purchase of a box of books for each class but the library is awaiting refurbishment. The school does not have a clearly defined book policy to provide guidance, for example, about how to display books in order to encourage a strong reading culture. However, initiatives such as the pupils in Year 6 reading stories to the Reception children are powerful motivators in improving both pupil literacy and their social development.
55. The awareness of standards of literacy in the school is acute. However, despite many positive indicators the leadership and management has not ensured that pupils in all classes are enjoying consistently the types of stimulating, high quality experiences that generate enthusiasm for language, encourage a joy of reading and accelerate improvement in standards.

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

56. Work on display covering a range of subjects provides evidence that there are opportunities to undertake well-planned and polished pieces of written work. However, this was not always the case in workbooks or folders in some of the foundation subjects. The pupils have occasional opportunities to word process their work and to use the Internet to access information but they are not regular enough to have a significant impact on standards.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Although standards are low pupils make satisfactory progress
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress
- Pupils' knowledge of shape is good
- Classroom assistants make a good contribution towards the quality of pupils learning
- Leadership and management lack rigour

### **Commentary**

57. National tests results show that standards are well below average by the end of Year 2 and below average by the end of Year 6. In relation to similar schools, attainment is well below average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6. The standards of work seen during the inspection show that while standards are rising slowly they remain below average, with children achieving satisfactorily.
58. Provision for children with special educational needs is good. Teachers and learning support assistants implement carefully drafted individual education plans that are closely linked to the work done in class. Learning support assistants also ably support pupils with English as an additional language. In a Year 6 lesson, as a result of the support, pupils contributed fully and

achieved well. The work done with less able children in Year 1 results in them achieving standards far greater than they could independently.

59. In most of the lessons observed the teaching focused on number skills and calculations and the pupils achieved well. By Year 2 the more able children count in hundreds from and back to zero and use simple multiplication and division. Most children read and write numbers to 20, count in twos and use doubles up to five. In Year 6 more able pupils calculate to three decimal places and find fractions of numbers. Most pupils use simple fractions and work out problems of increasing complexity involving multiplication and division. Teaching of shape is good and pupils achieve well. In Year 6 class the teacher uses a stimulating “Hangman” approach to recap pupils knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils’ questions and answers show a good understanding of the properties of shape. Hands shoot up when pupils realise that the mystery shape is a quadrilateral. Though there has been some improvement pupils get too few opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in open-ended investigations.
60. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Some good teaching was seen in Years 1, 2 and 6. In these lessons the teachers showed a good knowledge of their pupils and set challenging tasks that helped the pupils to achieve well. For instance, in the Year 2 lesson the group work activities were closely matched to the wide range of abilities within the class and those requiring additional equipment and resources had these readily to hand. However, the teachers’ assessment is not always so accurate nor their expectations so high. In one Year 4 mathematics lesson the work set for the higher attaining pupils was far too easy.
61. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has not analysed test results sufficiently to ensure that the teachers target weaker areas of mathematics in a systematic fashion. The coordinator has observed some colleagues’ teaching. However, the findings from this process have had little impact on improving the consistency of teaching across the school. The good teaching in the school is not used sufficiently to improve the quality of poorer lessons.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

62. This is unsatisfactory. Links with other curriculum areas are insufficiently planned and pupils do not have enough opportunity to use and apply their mathematics in all areas of life and learning.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The pupils achieve satisfactorily
- There has been sound improvement in the provision for investigative work
- There is some good teaching in Year 2
- Too many worksheets impede the development of more challenging work in Years 3 to 6
- The management of the subject is unsatisfactory

### **Commentary**

63. Although standards are well below the national average, the analysis of pupils' work shows that the vast majority are achieving satisfactorily and making steady progress. There has been a positive response to the findings of the last inspection, evidenced by an increase in the range and types of investigative work carried out by the pupils in their lessons, especially in relation to their work on life processes and living things. In Year 6 there is a satisfactory volume of written work that suggests a growing knowledge of scientific facts such as the names of the parts of plants and the major organs of the human body.
64. It was possible to observe only three science lessons during the inspection. The strongest teaching observed was in Year 2 where the teacher's marking of work is thorough; it often includes helpful detail that indicates what pupils have learned and what they should do to improve. Her detailed knowledge of individual pupils was evident from the start of the lesson when her questioning was carefully matched to the capabilities of the children as she encouraged them to recall their previous learning about the classification of materials. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities were successfully involved and learning moved along briskly because of the positive rapport between the pupils and the adults. The imaginative introduction of a letter from an alien to the pupils provided a helpful framework for learning and the children thoroughly enjoyed the idea of having to sort out a variety of items in order that the aliens had the right sort of food to eat.
65. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory, but varies in quality according to the teachers' subject knowledge. A Year 4 lesson on the classification of liquids, solids and gases worked well because the teacher provided a good variety of practical activities whereby the pupils could test their hypotheses about the behaviour of different types of solids. However, a brief revision session on forces in Year 6 showed that the teacher had insufficient knowledge of the pupils' prior learning and provided paper and pencil tasks that many children did not fully understand.
66. The wider analysis of the pupils' work in Years 3 to 6 indicates that, although the vast majority of the pupils are making adequate gains in their learning, worksheets are overused. These are generally pitched at the middle ability range and, while lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported by the effective work of the learning support assistants, the tasks do not always provide sufficient challenge for the higher attaining pupils, who could achieve more.
67. Although the subject leader is appropriately qualified and experienced, there are significant shortcomings in her work as a subject leader. Despite the completion of potentially worthwhile activities, such as work analysis and lesson observations, she is unable to articulate a coherent view of standards in science across the school. She does not check the teachers' planning, nor, as yet, review the pupil assessment forms being completed by teachers at the end of each unit of work. Much of the information necessary for an intelligent discussion about science was not immediately to hand for the inspection and the absence of a well organised subject leader's file is a significant indicator of the absence of consistently high expectations placed on senior staff by the headteacher.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The children are underachieving

- Not enough use is made of the computer suite
- Some learning support assistants provide valuable tuition for the pupils

### **Commentary**

68. The development of this subject suffered a major set back last summer when the subject leader was promoted to an assistant headteachership post elsewhere in the city. He had had successful oversight of the creation of a well-equipped computer suite and was previously able to provide valuable curriculum support and guidance for the staff. Since September the headteacher has held temporary responsibility for the subject and has done his best to ensure that the teachers continue to have the necessary resources readily to hand. A technician pays regular visits to service the computers and sort out any software problems and the school also subscribes to a telephone helpline service.
69. However, on the basis of the few lessons seen, the discussions with the pupils' and an analysis of their work it is evident that the children are not currently achieving as well as they should. During the inspection the computer suite stood empty for a significant amount of time each day. The volume of the children's work in the subject is low, especially in relation to controlling and modelling, and several of the pupils in Year 6 say that their lessons are often postponed due to technical problems or the imposition of other curriculum priorities.
70. The lessons observed ranged from unsatisfactory to good. The use of a learning support assistant in Year 3 to introduce a program that enables the pupils to design their own simulation was very effective for the six pupils involved. The assistant had prepared thoroughly and had a good knowledge of the program and what she intended the children to achieve. The pupils were encouraged to be independent and to work at their own pace while she in turn assisted the less able and posed more demanding tasks for the higher attainers. By the end of the session the pupils had acquired a good grasp of the sorts of techniques that they might apply to their own designs. However, the weakness of this approach is that at least six computers stood idle while the remainder of the class were with the teacher drawing two-dimensional story boards for their simulations. In contrast the Year 6 lesson provided good opportunities for the entire class to practise and improve their skills in searching the Internet for specific information. The teacher's questioning showed that the pupils had already learnt a good deal about search engines. By the end of the lesson the average and higher attainers were demonstrating increased confidence in the principles of refining their search by entering two key words.

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

71. The school has yet to plan for the systematic application of the power of new technologies across the curriculum. Although one or two teachers are doing their best to ensure that the children develop word processing skills and use computers to collate data for graphs and charts in mathematics, there are few signs of a coherent approach that builds steadily in demand as the pupils progress through the school. Gaps in hardware provision, such as electronic sensors that measure temperature or react to light, impede the development of some of the more exciting work possible with the pupils in Years 4 – 6.

## **HUMANITIES**

Insufficient evidence was available to support an overall judgement on provision in **history** as only one lesson was observed. Work in pupils' books was examined. Standards are broadly average and showed good levels of progress and achievement by Year 2. Pupils have a very good understanding of why the Great Fire spread so rapidly and the role of the key figures of the time, including Samuel Pepys and King Charles II. The curriculum reflects national subject guidance. By Year 6 pupils' work is of below average standard. There is insufficient depth to the curriculum in Years 3 to 6. A less thorough approach to topics results in a lack of depth to pupils' learning. There is a worksheet approach to teaching history and pupils have too few opportunities to use a wide range of information sources to develop their historical enquiry skills.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

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

- Teaching is good in Year 2
- Pupils' map skills are good
- Coverage lacks depth in Years 3 to 6
- Support staff are used well

### **Commentary**

72. By the end of Year 2 pupils have a good understanding of their local area through teaching that gives them practical fieldwork experience. Children conduct traffic surveys of the local main road and represent their findings in simple graphs. The teacher knows the children well and activities are well matched to their learning needs. A lesson on using and making simple maps included work at three different levels and resulted in all children achieving well. The less able produced maps of the classroom and the more able used atlases to record key features on a map of the British Isles. More complex maps are used in Year 5 and pupils use them, for example, to offer explanations about why Penzance attracts tourists.
73. Teachers' planning uses nationally available schemes of work but the coverage from Years 3 to 6 is superficial. Year 6 pupils' work indicates that they lack the experience to develop their geography skills fully and have few opportunities to undertake geographical investigations. Support staff are well used to extend pupils' learning. In Year 5 a small group were ably supported in the computer suite and by the end of the lesson could use a web site to explore aerial photographs of the area.

## CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

74. Work was sampled in all the subjects. One lesson was seen in design and technology and in music. Revisions to the curriculum in line with national guidance have taken place in all these subject areas. The teachers' planning indicates a satisfactory curriculum breadth, but the constraints of the current timetable arrangements and the variations in time allocations for subjects between classes results in a lack of overall balance.
75. Standards in **art and design** are still somewhat below average, as they were at the time of the last inspection. However, as a broader revised curriculum becomes more established throughout the school, pupils are making satisfactory progress in painting and in using media such as pastel crayons. The younger pupils are beginning to be able to mix colours satisfactorily, for example, and successfully acquiring the skills necessary to produce self-portraits. The older pupils showed a greater awareness of how detail improves the quality of portraits, for example, of Henry VIII and his wives. In one class, pupils had produced striking prints using junk materials and carefully selected superimposed paint colours. The range of work is not yet well established and older pupils do not make consistent use of sketchbooks to trial or modify their work. Some of the work in art reflects an awareness of the contribution of other cultures but the range is currently narrow.
76. In **design and technology**, pupils show interest in designing and making objects such as picture frames or experiencing food technology, which has involved creating and evaluating items such as biscuits and sandwiches. The one example of work in progress seen in Years 3 to 6 did not provide sufficient information to measure the pupils' attainment or progress over time in skills such as designing, joining components, selecting materials or evaluating and modifying their work.
77. In the one **music** lesson seen, the pupils in Years 5 and 6 responded enthusiastically to an opportunity to compose the words and sing a simple lyric. In discussion, older pupils expressed regret at not having sufficiently regular opportunities to use instruments but appreciated events held in collaboration with other schools.
78. The school is still striving to provide a better balanced curriculum and to ensure that, in addition to the important core subjects, sufficient time is allocated to the foundation subjects.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

79. Few specific lessons in personal, social, health education and citizenship were observed during the inspection. However, the evidence gathered and evaluated throughout the report indicates that personal, social and health education and citizenship is satisfactorily covered within the school's curriculum. The work of the learning mentor and the development of initiatives, such as peer mediation, suggest that pupils have good opportunities to develop knowledge and skills to support them in making decisions about issues that affect their lives.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>6</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	6
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>5</b>
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	5
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).*