

INSPECTION REPORT

CORPUS CHRISTI CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gateshead

LEA area: Gateshead

Unique reference number: 108382

Headteacher: Mrs C Ingle

Lead inspector: Mr A J Dobell

Dates of inspection: 13th to 15th September 2004

Inspection number: 266667

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:	190
School address:	Dunsmuir Grove Gateshead Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE8 4QL
Telephone number:	0191 477 2175
Fax number:	0191 421 3060
e-mail:	christineingle@gateshead.gov.uk
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father M C Purtill
Date of previous inspection:	November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This average sized primary school draws its pupils from two local parishes. These have a mixed pattern of housing but many families experience high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Children's attainment and learning skills cover a wide range when they enter the Nursery, but are well below average overall. Most pupils in the school are from white European backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language.

The school has 190 pupils on roll with 26 attending the Nursery on a part time basis. Thirty pupils are in the Reception class, making a full time equivalent of 43 children in the Foundation Stage. There are 53 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs and this proportion is above average. The nature of special educational needs includes moderate and severe learning difficulties, hearing impairment, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech and communication difficulties and physical disability. At 29 per cent, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than the normal time is below average and does not adversely affect standards. Over the last 3 years, the school has received a School Achievement Award, the Healthy Schools Award, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and an International award, and has had its Investors in People status renewed.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
10373	Mr A J Dobell	Lead inspector	English, Mathematics, Music, Physical education.
19374	Mrs W Sheehan	Lay inspector	
15011	Mrs M Wallace	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage, Geography, History.
21910	Mr G Longton	Team inspector	Special educational needs, English as an additional language, Science, Information and communication technology, Art and design, Design and technology.

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA
Herringston Barn
Herringston
Dorchester
Dorset
DT2 9PU

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school giving excellent value for money. Children enter the Nursery with standards and learning skills which cover a wide range but are well below average overall. They achieve very well in the Foundation Stage and continue to make very good progress in Years 1 to 6. The quality of teaching is very good overall with about four lessons in ten being very good or excellent. Leadership and management are very good and the headteacher and her colleagues are continually seeking ways to improve the school further.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good leadership from the headteacher, fully supported by her deputy, all her colleagues and the governing body, has enabled the school to improve well since its previous inspection.
- Very good teaching and excellent systems for assessment enable pupils to achieve very well throughout the school.
- A very rich curriculum motivates pupils well so that they have good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall, but opportunities for pupils to experience the diversity and richness of other cultures are a relative weakness.
- The Foundation Stage and provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- Pupils are given very good levels of care and feel very secure in the school.
- External hard play areas slope steeply and the limited outdoor provision for children in the Reception Year inhibits their progression in physical skills.

The school has improved very well since its previous inspection because the headteacher's very effective leadership has raised standards very well by the end of Year 2 and well by the end of Year 6. Teaching and learning have improved very well and assessment is now excellent.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is very good throughout the school. Children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage and children achieved the goals that they are expected to reach at the end of the Reception Year in the summer of 2004. Pupils continue to achieve very well in Years 1 and 2 and, from 2002 to 2004, attained above average standards in the national tests at the end of Year 2. This very good achievement continues in Years 3 to 6, as the results attained in 2003 demonstrate. However, standards at the end of Year 6 vary from year to year, depending, for example, on how many pupils in a particular year group have special educational needs. In 2004, results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 declined significantly because one third of the pupils in that year group had special educational needs. Even so, that year group made good progress in Years 3 to 6 in relation to their prior attainment. Standards in information and communication technology have improved since the school was inspected previously and are now above average at the end of Years 2 and 6.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good overall. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to appreciate the richness and diversity of other cultures, and this is a relative weakness. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well both in and out of class. These good attitudes and very good personal development are firmly rooted in the school's Roman Catholic ethos. Attendance is above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school with particular strengths in the Foundation Stage and Year 6. Systems for assessing pupils' achievement and planning their further progress are excellent. Teachers try very hard to make lessons interesting and most pupils put a good deal of effort into their work. Teaching assistants support learning very effectively.

The quality of the curriculum is very good and there are good opportunities for enrichment outside class. Information and communication technology is used very well to support learning. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support and the few pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve very well because they are supported very well. The school provides its pupils with very good levels of care so that they are secure in the school and achieve very well both personally and in their learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher is providing very good leadership. She has a very clear vision for the school and has created an impressive unity of purpose among her colleagues. All are fully committed to continuing improvement. There are very effective staff teams and all fully support the school's priority of equality of opportunity and full inclusion for all pupils and adults. Management is very good. The school is very evaluative and systems for assessing pupils' achievement and planning their further progress are excellent. Planning for improvement is thoroughly thought through and staff professional development is carefully linked to the school's priorities for improvement. Financial management is efficient and the principles of best value are applied well. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and potential for development and ensure that the school fulfils its legal requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have positive views of the school overall. A minority of parents have concerns about behaviour and bullying, but acknowledge that the school deals effectively with occasional instances which arise. A few questioned if their children enjoyed school, but inspectors found no evidence that pupils did not. Some pupils also raised the issue of behaviour, but inspectors found behaviour and relationships to be good overall.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no key issues for the school to address but, in the context of its many strengths, the following points for improvement should be considered as the basis for an action plan:

- improve pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of other cultures;
- extend the outdoor play space for children in the Reception class and improve the quality of outdoor play for the older children.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is very good throughout the school regardless of gender and level of achievement. Pupils with special educational needs and the very few who speak English as an additional language achieve very well. Standards in English, mathematics and information and communication technology are above average in Years 2 and 6 while standards in science are well above average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve very well in the Foundation Stage because their learning is very effectively managed.
- Standards have risen overall at the end of Year 2 in recent years and are now above average.
- Standards have been variable at the end of Year 6, but evidence from the inspection is that the pupils in the current Year 6 are achieving very well.
- Pupils achieve very well in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology and attain above average standards.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well throughout the school.
- Pupils achieve very well because the headteacher and her colleagues are strongly committed to raising standards.

Commentary

1. In the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003 (the last year for which national comparisons are available), standards in reading were well above average, in mathematics they were above average, and in writing they were average. These were identical to the standards attained in 2002. Teachers' assessment for science placed the school in the top five per cent of all schools in the country. When compared with similar schools, standards were well above average in reading and writing, average in mathematics, and in the top five per cent of these schools in science. Since children enter the Nursery with standards and learning skills which are well below average overall, these results represent very good achievement.
2. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003, standards were well above average in English and mathematics and in the top five per cent of all schools in science. When compared to similar schools, these results were well above average in each subject. Again these results represent very good achievement.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.5 (17.9)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	14.5 (14.3)	14.6 (14.4)

Mathematics	16.9 (17.2)	16.3 (16.5)
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There were 21 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.9 (27.5)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.9 (26.2)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	31.7 (27.3)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 23 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Results in the national tests in 2004 are likely to be similar at the end of Year 2, although standards in writing are likely to improve because the school has made this a priority for improvement. At the end of Year 6, in the national tests in 2004, standards are likely to fall. The Year 6 class which left the school in 2003 was exceptionally talented, while in the group that left in 2004, one third of the pupils had special educational needs. Inspectors analysed the records of these pupils and these demonstrated that they had made good progress and achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. Further analysis of the school's records indicates that well above average standards at the end of Year 2 are likely to be maintained in future years while standards at the end of Year 6 are likely to be average in 2005 and above average in 2006. This represents very good achievement overall.
- A major reason for this very good achievement overall is the very good progress that children make in the Foundation Stage. Children's levels of knowledge and learning skills cover a wide range when they enter the Nursery but are well below average overall. They achieve very well in the Nursery and Reception class because their learning is very carefully planned and managed. All adults create frequent opportunities for children to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding and to explain and articulate their thinking. Their progress is then very carefully tracked and recorded so that the next steps in their learning can build on what they already know. As a result of this, last year's Reception children reached the standards expected nationally in the early learning goals designed for this age group by the end of the Reception Year. The very effective management of their learning means that current children in Reception are also achieving very well, though it is early in the year and standards are still below average. They are being well prepared to begin their work on the National Curriculum in Year 1.
- Pupils continue to make very good progress in Years 1 and 2. Teaching is challenging but interesting learning activities motivate pupils to work hard. They complete an impressive amount of work and make clear progress in their knowledge and understanding as they get older. Again, their learning is very carefully managed and their progress tracked to guide the planning of future learning. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have been above average in 2002 and 2003 and are likely to continue to be above average in 2004. This represents very good achievement. This very good achievement from the Nursery to the end of Year 2 results from very effective management of learning.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 have been more variable, reflecting the proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the different year groups. Mathematics has been the weakest subject with the exception of 2003. The school has recognised this

and, having targeted English and information and communication technology in previous years, now has a range of plans in place to raise standards in mathematics. Evidence from the inspection is that pupils in the present Year 6 are attaining above average standards in English, mathematics and information and communication technology and well above average standards in science for this stage of the school year. Pupils are now entering Year 3 with higher standards and an analysis of pupils' work shows that they build well on these above average standards in Years 3 to 6. Again, this represents very good achievement.

7. One reason for the general raising of standards is the improved use of information and communication technology since the school's previous inspection. Standards have improved well in Years 2 and 6 and information and communication technology is now used routinely to promote learning in other subjects. Teachers use computer-driven whiteboards effectively to introduce lessons in subjects across the curriculum. This engages pupils' interest very effectively so that they work with interest and sustained concentration. Opportunities are provided for pupils to use computers, and other information and communication technology facilities such as listening stations, in class when this is appropriate. The use of information and communication technology to promote learning and raise standards has improved well since the school was inspected previously.
8. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is managed very effectively. Their needs are addressed as soon as they become apparent and individual education plans are written to respond to their individual needs. Their progress is then very carefully tracked and information from this monitoring of their learning is used to plan their future work. They are very well supported in class by teaching assistants and their learning is extended in small withdrawn groups when specialist teachers enable them to work on identified weaknesses. This very thorough management of their learning means that they achieve very well overall in relation to their previous standards.
9. Overall, standards have risen well since the school's previous inspection. This is because the headteacher and her colleagues are united in their determination to improve standards. To this end, areas of perceived weakness have been targeted, for example, in writing. There is clear evidence that the school's strategies have been effective in raising standards. A key element in this has been the school's development of its assessment systems, which are now excellent. The marking of pupils' work has improved significantly and gives pupils clear indications of how they can improve further. Their progress is then tracked very effectively so that targets for further improvement can be set. These assessment systems are central to pupils' very good achievement. They place the school in a strong position to raise standards further.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils have good attitudes to school life and they behave well. Their spiritual, moral and social development is very good and their cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a positive attitude to all aspects of school and these are reflected in their good attendance.
- Pupils are keen to learn and this enables them to achieve very well in their lessons.
- Pupils behave well because they know clearly what is expected of them.
- Relationships are good throughout the school and, as a result, pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility and community as they progress through the school.
- Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral and social development, are very good overall; cultural development is not as strong.

Commentary

10. Levels of attendance are above average and have been maintained since the school's previous inspection. There was no unauthorised absence in 2003-04 and the majority of pupils arrive punctually. The school has developed incentives to improve attendance and patterns of attendance are monitored rigorously and appropriate action taken where necessary. No pupils were excluded in the last school year.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.6	School data	0.0
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.

11. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school because they like the teachers and other adults who help them. They want to learn and are interested in new things; pupils' and parents' questionnaires confirm this view. Their positive attitudes make a significant contribution to the very good progress that they make. In the Reception class, for example, excellent teaching and exciting activities contributed to the children's very good attitudes. They were elated as they mixed the ingredients to make their own ginger bread man and fascinated as they learned how the heat changed the mixture. This involvement and enjoyment has a very positive impact on achievement throughout the school. Most Nursery and Reception children are on course to achieve the expected goals in personal, social and emotional development by the end of the Foundation Stage.
12. Behaviour is generally good both in and out of lessons. Pupils' good behaviour results in an orderly environment in which everyone can get on with their learning. Behaviour has improved in the playground since the school introduced the buddy system. Any minor incidents of bullying and harassment are always dealt with swiftly. Expectations for good behaviour are clearly defined and reinforced consistently as pupils progress through the school.
13. Relationships are good throughout the school. Pupils' personal development is promoted by the responsibilities given to older pupils who enjoy acting as playground buddies and prefects. The very good provision for those with special educational needs helps these pupils to acquire positive attitudes to their work and to maintain their concentration. They are very well integrated into the school community. The very

good level of sensitive support and encouragement that they receive has a major impact on their self-esteem and their achievement. They are confident to ask for help, knowing that it will be readily available.

14. The strong Christian ethos which permeates the school contributes to the very good opportunities which pupils have to become spiritually aware. Moral development is consistently emphasised. As a result, all pupils know right from wrong, and develop respect for the feelings of others. A strong sense of the school as a community is fostered and this contributes to pupils developing a sense of the need to support each other. Visits to local places of historical and geographical interest make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development and encourage them to consider ways to improve their own local community. Pupils learn to respect other religions because the school welcomes visits and visitors representing different faiths. There are some visits from members of the local Jewish community and pupils visit a Sikh temple. Visitors talk about Sikhism and pupils enjoy watching Indian food cooked. An analysis of displays around the school, however, shows little reference to living in a multi-cultural society, including Muslim and Afro-Caribbean elements, and the focus on this aspect of cultural development is not as strong as other areas.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. The quality of teaching is very good overall with particular strengths in the Foundation Stage and Year 6. As a result, pupils achieve very well and make very good progress. Pupils benefit from a very good curriculum. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for the very few who speak English as an additional language. The school's systems for assessing pupils' progress and promoting their further progress are excellent. They contribute significantly to the very good care and guidance that pupils receive. Links with parents, other schools and the community are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall and systems for assessing pupils' progress are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent systems for assessing pupils' progress are used very effectively so that pupils are given high levels of challenge.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects of the curriculum and work hard to provide interesting learning activities.
- There is very good teaching for pupils with special educational needs and the very few who speak English as an additional language.
- The headteacher and her senior colleagues monitor teaching and learning very effectively to ensure teaching and learning of high quality.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (14%)	9 (25%)	22 (61%)	0	0	0	0

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

15. The quality of teaching is very good overall and pupils' learning is planned and supported very effectively. In all lessons observed during the inspection, learning was always good or very good. Teaching and learning are particularly strong in the Foundation Stage and in Year 6, where there were examples of excellent lessons.
16. In the Foundation Stage, teachers and nursery nurses form a strong team with a very clear understanding of how young children learn. They offer the children a wide range of interesting and stimulating learning activities, which are carefully planned to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically. This enables them to make very good, rapid progress and to achieve very well. As a result, most are likely to achieve the standards expected nationally in the goals for this age group by the end of the Reception Year. Since they enter the Nursery with standards and learning skills which, while covering a wide range, are well below average overall, this represents very good achievement. Limited space outside means that children in the Reception class do not develop physical skills as quickly as they might, for example, in climbing and using large wheeled vehicles.
17. Pupils continue to achieve very well in Years 1 to 6. Teachers use time and learning resources very well and work very hard to make lessons interesting. Stimulating and interesting learning activities motivate pupils well and provide them with a good level of challenge. As a result, most pupils put a good amount of effort into their work and so learn very effectively. Since the school has a very strong ethos rooted in its Catholic tradition, all pupils know that they are valued and that they have full access to all that the school offers. All adults in the school promote very good relationships with pupils and this gives them the confidence to work to their full potential, knowing that they can ask for help and that it will be readily given. Very effective encouragement helps pupils to concentrate very well so that very good teaching has its full impact on learning in most lessons.
18. Throughout the school, excellent systems for assessing pupils' progress promote learning very effectively. Pupils' work is thoroughly and sensitively marked and suggestions are made for standards to be improved further. The progress of individual pupils is tracked systematically and information from this is analysed to set whole class targets and targets for individual pupils. Pupils are well aware of their targets for improvement and are happy to discuss how they plan to reach them. The school is developing systems of self-assessment and peer assessment to give pupils a greater awareness of their own learning. A key element in promoting effective learning is that teachers throughout the school make the learning objectives for lessons very clear so that pupils can assess how effective their learning has been. The school carefully analyses the results of the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 and the optional tests at the end of Years 3, 4 and 5 to identify any weaknesses. Future learning can then be planned to ensure that these weaknesses can be overcome. These very thorough systems for assessment are a marked improvement since the previous inspection.

19. Learning is very effective because teachers throughout the school have a very good command of the subjects of the National Curriculum. The school took the comments made in the previous inspection report seriously and has worked effectively to improve the quality of teaching. For example, the teaching of science and information and communication technology was judged to be satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. It is now very good. This is a significant improvement. In very good and excellent lessons, high expectations for pupils' effort and behaviour, clear learning objectives and learning activities which stimulate pupils' interest combine to promote very effective learning. For example, in an excellent science lesson in Year 6, the teacher's high expectations, lively approach, rapid pace and clear explanations meant that pupils were fully engaged in learning. Excellent use of the computer-driven whiteboard further motivated pupils and they were encouraged to work and think independently. 'Think for yourself' said the teacher in response to a question, but her praise and encouragement gave pupils the confidence to work independently. The result was very high achievement with pupils attaining higher standards than are expected at this stage of the school year.
20. Similarly, in an excellent literacy lesson in the Reception class, the teacher made her expectations absolutely clear. Excellent use of resources such as puppets ensured that the children were fully engaged in learning and sensitive but searching questions helped them to develop their speaking skills. A high ratio of adults to children meant that individuals were given a very good level of attention. Very good pace and judicious use of praise and encouragement ensured that achievement was excellent.
21. Pupils with special educational needs are given very effective support so that they achieve very well because all teachers are familiar with the Code of Practice for special educational needs. Individual needs are identified as quickly as possible in the Foundation Stage. Individual education plans are written by the co-ordinator for special educational needs supported by the class teacher, the learning support teachers and teaching assistants. Targets are shared with pupils and learning is planned in short steps so that pupils understand that they are making progress. Pupils are very effectively supported in class by teaching assistants and systematic withdrawal in small groups means that their knowledge, skills and understanding are reinforced well. Similarly, the few pupils who speak English as an additional language are taught very effectively and so achieve very well.
22. The headteacher realises that her staff are her major resource. She and her senior colleagues monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and provide very effective support. Learning is managed carefully and sensitively but with rigour to ensure that pupils are achieving very well. The school has an ethos of openness and colleagues discuss issues and support each other to deal with any problems. All are willing to be innovative and to try new initiatives if they will benefit pupils by improving teaching and learning. The school's commitment to maximising opportunities for its pupils mean that teaching and learning have improved well since its previous inspection. The school is in a good position to raise standards further.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. It provides its pupils with a very good range of worthwhile learning opportunities, successfully meeting their interests, aptitudes and learning needs. There is a good range of activities outside class, accommodation is adequate, and learning resources meet the needs of the curriculum well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides its pupils with a balanced and interesting curriculum, which prepares them successfully for the future stages of education.
- The strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are very effective and are developed well through work in other subjects.
- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is a good range of activities outside class.
- The availability of computers and software is good so that pupils can use their information and communication technology skills when studying other subjects.
- Outdoor play facilities are limited.

Commentary

23. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements to teach all subjects of the National Curriculum. A very good curriculum is provided for children in the Foundation Stage, addressing all the areas of learning very effectively. Appropriate schemes of planning are in place for all subjects, based on the latest national guidelines. Throughout Years 1 to 6, good planning ensures that teachers are provided with a range of suitable topics and guidance upon which to base their lesson plans. The quality of the curriculum has improved well since the school was inspected previously.
24. The school has implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well. Guided reading and writing sessions are very successful in promoting essential skills, which are now practised regularly and effectively in other subjects. There is good emphasis on mental computation. The development of pupils' skills in information and communication technology is now very good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
25. All pupils have full access to the curriculum and this is a very good feature of the school. Pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language are very well supported so that they work alongside their peers to take advantage of the curriculum offered. The targets set for them are clear and they receive very good support. These targets are reviewed and revised regularly to make sure they are still appropriate to the pupils' current needs. When necessary, the curriculum is carefully adapted to their needs so that their individual education plans are met. The school moves quickly to take effective action when there is a need. Additional support is given to pupils to provide targeted help in literacy and numeracy. Pupils attend these sessions eagerly because teachers provide interesting contexts for learning.
26. A range of sporting activities is provided outside school lessons and pupils have the opportunity to participate in sporting events. A good range of extra-curricular activities

includes football, information and communication technology, guitar, recorders, mixed sports, and a story and book club.

27. A dedicated and enthusiastic team of teachers and teaching assistants work together well. All of these adults are well deployed to meet the demands of the curriculum and to support pupils' learning needs. There are very well established arrangements for staff development, guided by the school development plan. Staff present very attractive displays throughout the building and these create a very pleasant and stimulating learning environment. By the end of the present extensive rebuilding programme, the quality and adequacy of the accommodation will meet the requirements of the staff and improve the quality of education provided. The school has plans and the necessary finance to make good use of the new facilities now nearing completion. For example, a new library area is planned with additional stock being provided to help staff to improve their pupils' library skills. A new lift will provide access for pupils with physical disabilities. However, the school's playground has quite a steep slope and during the inspection several pupils in Years 1 and 2 were seen to stumble as they ran too quickly down the slope, but were well looked after by staff. The outdoor area for children in the Foundation Stage is limited, and, although staff make good use of all the space that they have, there is some impact on children's achievement in their physical development. Though the accommodation is being completely renovated, improvements to the outdoor play facilities have not been included in the plans, although they are in the school development plan. Resources for learning are at least satisfactory overall, and in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, history, geography and music they are good.
28. Careful planning over time is ensuring that staffing, accommodation and learning resources have improved well since the school's previous inspection. As a result, the curricular provision for pupils throughout the school has improved well.

Care, guidance and support

Very good levels of support and guidance enable pupils to develop a sense of responsibility and care for others. Procedures to ensure that pupils work in a safe environment are equally very good. The school involves pupils well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good procedures for induction help children to settle quickly when they join the school.
- The school's procedures for health, safety and child protection are very good and ensure that all pupils work in a safe and secure environment.
- Excellent assessment procedures and the strong relationships between teachers and pupils are very effective in guiding all pupils' learning and personal development.
- The school council's role is still developing but is already felt by pupils to be a worthwhile initiative.

Commentary

29. The school ensures that children enjoy a smooth induction into the Nursery through home visits and helping them to feel secure in their new environment. Transition to the Reception

class is also carefully managed to ensure children feel safe and happy. These procedures help children to make very good progress in their early learning. Analysis of the parental questionnaire shows that the overwhelming majority of parents confirm that they feel that the arrangements for settling in their child are good. The school organises a range of parental classes to help parents to support their children during the early years of their education.

30. The school ensures that regular health and safety checks are carried out. The governing body is actively involved in supporting these arrangements. On a day-to-day basis, the conscientious caretaker and his team ensure that pupils work in a clean, safe learning environment. However, the playground with the severe slopes towards the drains causes a significant hazard. The school is aware of this and is exploring funding to improve the situation. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and, through a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme, pupils develop a very good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. Child protection procedures are well embedded and the school is diligent in monitoring the welfare of its pupils consistently. All teaching and non-teaching staff have received training and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about a child. This very good care ensures that pupils are given appropriate opportunities to learn in a secure environment.
31. Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good role models for all pupils and create a purposeful learning environment, where relationships are very good. The school is very caring and concerned for the welfare of pupils with special educational needs. Pastoral support is seen as a very important aspect of the school's work in line with its Christian ethos. All staff know their pupils very well and have established very good relationships with them. All pupils are confident to go to staff with any concerns. The school also works well with other agencies to ensure that pupils with special educational needs have extra support where required. The school's excellent assessment procedures are used very effectively to guide pupils in their learning. Through the use of individual targets, pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve. For example, in discussion, pupils were familiar with how to improve their work between a "3c" level and a "4" level. Day-to-day marking is very effective in showing pupils how they can improve their work further. Pupils with behavioural problems are also given appropriate targets to help them to improve their behaviour. This has a positive effect on all pupils' achievement.
32. Pupils' views are actively taken into account, giving them a sense of responsibility for the school's development and improvement. The school council, currently only made up of pupils in Years 5 and 6, has been involved effectively in discussions about improving the school environment, for example, by buying play equipment. The school also used questionnaires to evaluate pupils' opinions of the school. There are plans to involve more year groups in the work of the school council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents and its links with other schools are good and play an important role in achieving the school's aims. Links with the community are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' views of the school are favourable.

- Good information and meetings for parents help them to be part of the learning partnership.
- Parents' views are valued and acted upon as part of the school's self-evaluation.
- Links with other schools, especially the main secondary school to which pupils transfer, are very good, and good community links promote learning well.

Commentary

33. An analysis of the parents' questionnaires shows that most parents who expressed an opinion agreed that teaching is good, that the school is well led and managed, that there is an interesting range of activities and that induction arrangements are good. Inspection findings fully support these positive views. Parental support has a positive effect on their children's attainment and progress.
34. The school continues to explore ways of involving parents with their children's learning. In the Foundation Stage strong links exist with parents and daily contact ensures that good relationships exist between home and school. Parents are given opportunities to attend a range of courses in conjunction with the community education provision. There are also opportunities for parents to learn more about the school through short curriculum courses in literacy, numeracy and computer skills. The school's 'Friends association' raises funds to support the school and these funds have helped in improving the learning environment, for example, through the purchase of books. This promotion of parental involvement helps children to extend their learning outside school. The quality of the documentation that the school provides for parents is good. Newsletters and information about the curriculum are sent out regularly and are informative. Pupils' annual reports include appropriately detailed information about their progress. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are succinctly written documents to inform parents about the school and meet statutory requirements. As far as it can, the school establishes close links with parents of children who have special educational needs and an increasing number are becoming involved in their children's learning. Parents of the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language are also helped to support their children's learning.
35. The school uses its own questionnaire on a regular basis to ascertain parents' views and, through constant self-evaluation, is always seeking ways to improve its partnership with parents further. Parents have frequent opportunities to talk to teachers and the headteacher about any ideas or concerns. The school secretary provides a warm welcome for all visitors and helps parents to feel important and valued partners in their child's learning.
36. Very good links, both pastoral and academic, exist with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer. These include transition units of work begun in Year 6 and continued into Year 7 and a specific information and communication technology project. Community links are good. There are strong links with the local community through the parish church and both parents and governors emphasise the importance of the 'family of the parish'. The school uses visits to the local community well to enhance learning. For example, a group of pupils have visited a local pizza restaurant.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. Governance is good with some clear strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very effective leadership and is committed to continuing improvement.
- There is an impressive unity of purpose in the school and its culture of openness enables all staff to contribute to leadership and management.
- The school evaluates its performance carefully and its strategic planning is based on its analysis of its strengths and potential for development.
- Teachers' leadership and management of the curriculum is very good.
- Finances are managed well and the school is able to plan its development successfully because it observes the principles of best value.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development because many are in school regularly.

Commentary

37. The headteacher, very well supported by her deputy, is providing the school with very good leadership. She believes that everyone connected with the school should be valued so that they give of their best. All are valued for what they can offer. The school is very effective in giving all its members equal opportunities and access to all that it provides. The headteacher understands clearly that, if her pupils are to achieve their potential, they must feel safe, secure and confident in the school. As a result, the school makes the pastoral care of its pupils a key priority, but couples this with high expectations for their effort and behaviour. The headteacher's very good leadership of the curriculum ensures that pupils are provided with challenging and interesting learning activities which will motivate them so that they work hard and do their best. The school's ambition for its pupils to be successful is rooted in its Catholic traditions and all who contribute to the school recognise the school's special place in 'the family of the parish'.
38. The school's concern for its pupils to achieve success both in their work and their personal development results in a commitment to continuing improvement. Since its previous inspection, sensitive but rigorous leadership from the headteacher has resulted in a good improvement in the quality of teaching. An important aspect of this is the marked improvement in the use of information and communication technology to support learning. This is now very effective. Teachers' skilful use of computer-driven whiteboards motivates pupils very well so that they concentrate well and their learning is very effective. The school's learning environment is also enhanced by the attractive displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school. These value pupils' work and encourage them to improve their work further.
39. The headteacher has a clear appreciation that her staff are her most important asset. The school has a culture of openness among its teachers so that all feel involved and able to contribute to leadership and management. Because all staff feel valued, they all fully support the school's ethos of care and challenge for all pupils. Teaching assistants all feel valued because they are involved in planning and feel their views and contributions matter. This results in an impressive unity of purpose. All adults are fully committed to school improvement and to providing all pupils with full equality of

access to all that the school offers. All adults provide very good role models for pupils and very good relationships between adults and pupils are the basis for pupils' feeling of security, which enables them to give of their best.

40. A major factor in empowering staff so that they all contribute to very effective learning is the school's rigorous analysis of its performance. Excellent assessment systems are a major strength of the school and their development is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Their use by all staff enables pupils' learning to be managed systematically so that all understand how further progress can be made. This information feeds into the school's strategic planning and guides the priorities in the school development plan. The outcomes of these plans are then evaluated so that priorities for future plans can be determined. Very effective monitoring of performance data, and the use of this information to guide strategic planning, have helped the school to improve very well since its previous inspection.
41. Teachers make a significant contribution to the school's work in their very good leadership and management of subjects and areas of the school. Very effective management of the early learning of the youngest children in the school in the Nursery and Reception class enables them to achieve very well and provides a secure base for their future learning. In Years 1 to 6, subjects are managed very well and this has contributed to the good improvement in the school's curriculum since its previous inspection. A particular success has been the development of information and communication technology, led by the headteacher, which is now taught very well and contributes very well to learning in other subjects. The proportion of pupils in the school with special educational needs is well above average and their learning is managed very well. Individual needs are clearly identified and resources are targeted to maximum effect. Pupils' individual targets are realistic and achievable. They are shared with pupils and parents and reviewed regularly. Pupils are very well supported in their learning and, as a result, achieve very well. Similarly, the learning of the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language is managed very well. They are fully integrated into the school community and achieve at the same rate as other pupils.
42. Governors also contribute well to the school as an important part of the team. Most governors are frequently in school and all have a responsibility for a subject or curriculum area. As a result, they are in a good position to monitor and evaluate the school's progress. They have a good awareness of the school's strengths and potential for improvement and are realistic in their judgements of how quickly improvements can be achieved. They are keenly aware of the school's special place in the parish and aim to maintain the school's position as a 'beacon in the community'. They appreciate that education is the key to improving their pupils' life chances.
43. The school is managed very well on a day-to-day basis. Its routines are straightforward and readily understood so that it operates smoothly. Finances are managed well and prudent forward planning has put the school in a good position to finance its current building programme and stock its new library. The finance committee of the governing body plays an appropriate role in setting the budget and in monitoring the school's expenditure over the year. Day-to-day expenditure is managed efficiently by the school secretary, who plays a significant part in the school's smooth running. The school's accounts were audited in September 2003. The audit

concluded that the school's financial systems operated satisfactorily with some major areas of good practice. Its few recommendations for improvement have been adopted.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	448,315	Balance from previous year	98,016
Total expenditure	423,199	Balance carried forward to the next	123,132
Expenditure per pupil	2,278		

44. The high proportion of the budget carried forward is being used to finance the school's current building programme and to improve staffing levels. Given pupils' very good achievement, their very good personal development, the very good curriculum offered, the very good teaching and care available to pupils, the very good leadership and management, and the school's low costs per pupil, the school gives excellent value for money.
45. The major reason for this is the headteacher's purposeful and clear-sighted leadership. She is a frequent and reassuring presence around the school and pupils understand that she cares deeply for them, but also that she has high expectations for their behaviour and effort. Together with her deputy and colleagues, she has ensured that the school has improved very well since its previous inspection. The school is in a good position to improve further.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

46. Children make very good progress and achieve very well in both the Nursery and Reception classes because the quality of teaching is consistently very good with some examples of excellent teaching. Children experience a rich curriculum that is extremely well planned and organised. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is well below average with half of the children needing speech therapy. A detailed analysis of work and records of achievement shows that children make very good progress in the Nursery, but attainment on entry to the Reception class is still below average overall. By the end of the Reception year in 2004, the majority of children had achieved the expected goals for their age in all areas of learning. Children with special educational needs are fully included in all activities and this ensures they make the same very good progress as their peers. There are currently no children who speak English as an additional language in the Foundation Stage.
47. Children enter the Nursery after their third birthday. There is a very thorough induction process and parents are kept well informed as their children enter the school and move through the Foundation Stage and into Year 1. As the inspection took place during the second week of the autumn term, not all children were yet in school. A close examination of work from the previous year has contributed to the judgements made. The Nursery and Reception class are staffed with well-qualified personnel: there is a qualified teacher and a nursery nurse in each class plus additional support where necessary.
48. All adults have excellent relationships with the children, who respond with enthusiasm to the stimulating range of activities provided for them. Children enjoy coming to school and every opportunity is seized to build on children's prior attainment and extend all areas of learning. The school soon identifies areas of need and takes steps to ensure that the children are very well supported. Planning is very well linked to national guidance for the Foundation Stage and there is a close match of work to the ability of each child. Procedures to check on children's progress are excellent.
49. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. Adults in both the Nursery and Reception class work closely together. The school is aware of the need to develop the outdoor provision and they are currently making good use of the limited outdoor space available. Since the previous inspection, the school has worked hard to establish its Nursery provision. The quality of teaching and learning has improved from good to very good and the school has ensured that all children benefit from consistently high quality provision and teaching throughout their time in the Foundation Stage.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy coming to school and confidently and happily leave their parents and carers.
- Social skills and independence are developed very well.
- There is a very good balance between teacher-directed activities and activities which children choose for themselves.
- All adults establish excellent relationships with children in the Foundation Stage.

Commentary

50. Most children enter the Nursery with immature skills in personal and social development. They all settle into the Nursery very well and enjoy their activities and coming to school. Children develop a positive attitude to school and establish excellent relationships with adults. These special relationships contribute to the very good progress that they make. Teachers plan interesting activities which children enjoy and these help them to develop their ability to concentrate. Children are strongly encouraged to develop their independence from the time they join the school. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, children select their own activities for the day by placing the busy bee on the activity of their choice. There is a good balance between the activities that children choose for themselves and teacher-directed activities such as listening to stories and playing in the role-play areas. Adults are positive, and every opportunity is seized to reinforce personal and social development and to identify expectations of behaviour consistently. Children learn to consider the feelings of others, and to be kind to each other and living things such as butterflies and baby chicks. They also learn to care for their classroom by tidying up at the end of activity sessions.
51. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is very good and children's achievement is very good. In the Reception class, children play together very well and are aware of the needs of others. All adults make expectations of behaviour clear. They use their observation skills very well and intervene skilfully with children to challenge and extend their learning. By the end of the Reception Year in 2004, the majority of the children had achieved the expected goals in this area of learning.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make very good gains in all aspects of their learning during the Foundation Stage because there is a strong focus on this area of learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall with instances of excellent teaching.

Commentary

52. Children enter the school with communication, language and literacy skills that are well below average. A significant number of children experience speech difficulties and lack clarity in speaking simple words and phrases. They benefit from very good teaching in the Nursery but, by the time they enter the Reception class, standards are

still below the expected level. They continue to receive very good and often excellent teaching in the Reception Year and, consequently, by the end of the year, an analysis of their work and an examination of records indicate that most children are attaining the expected goals, demonstrating very good achievement.

53. There are very good opportunities throughout the Nursery and Reception class for children to develop their speaking and listening skills. All adults take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and challenge them to respond to questions and expand on their answers. For example, a Reception child identified the rhyming word in the story and the teacher challenged further by asking the children to explain why the words rhyme. Very good planning ensures that there is a strong focus on communication and literacy skills. Teachers identify specific questions to be asked; for example, 'How do we make the car travel?' and 'Which switch do we press?' Children develop their ability to respond to experiences and express and communicate ideas very well because adults are constantly challenging them to do so.
54. There are appropriate opportunities in both the Nursery and Reception class for children to take books home regularly. They make very good progress in their ability to listen to stories and to read books. Children in the Reception class enjoy books but their knowledge of books is limited. They all selected 'The Gingerbread Man' as their favourite book because the teacher made the story so exciting and they enjoyed the characters and events. Higher attaining children identify different letters and talk about the characters and events in the story. They all handle books carefully and know that words and pictures communicate meaning.
55. There are very good opportunities in both the Nursery and Reception class to draw and trace and, for higher attaining children, to write sentences. An analysis of work from the previous term indicates that children achieved the expected goals in writing by the end of the school year in 2004. Teachers use real life experiences very well to motivate children. After a visit to a farm, for example, a higher attaining child wrote, 'We went on the tractor and fed the baby calf from the bottle'. 'I stroked the sheep, I liked the sheep'. 'The cow gives us milk'. Higher attaining children use capital letters and full stops and successfully record events such as their trip to the seaside.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make very good gains in their learning and achievement is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall with instances of excellent teaching.
- Activities planned interest all children and contribute to the very good progress made.

Commentary

56. Children enter the Nursery with few mathematical skills. They achieve very well and make very good progress in the Nursery and Reception class as a result of very good and, sometimes, excellent teaching in this area of learning. An analysis of work confirms that the majority of children achieved the expected level in the early learning

goals at the end of the last school year. From the time that children enter the Nursery, they are encouraged to develop their mathematical understanding by counting objects, observing shapes and experiencing simple calculations. Children enjoy playing in the shop and they develop an awareness of money and number because they are challenged to identify the prices of goods and to exchange money for goods. Children continue to make very good progress in the Reception class and, by the end of the year, most children recognise and write numbers up to ten. They understand the concept of more and less and understand differences in size. An analysis of work shows that average children write numbers up to 31, while higher attaining children confidently add 16 and 16 and correctly write the number 32. Average children name and identify two-dimensional shapes and they add and take away confidently. Lower attaining children write simple number sentences and make repeating patterns.

57. In the Reception class, children made significant gains in their mathematical understanding and knowledge because the quality of teaching and learning was excellent. Children of low prior attainment were guided to estimate the number of raisins they would be able to place on the gingerbread man's body. Skilful teaching helped children to successfully add, take away, identify symmetry and asymmetry, and to estimate and check estimations. The children thoroughly enjoyed decorating the gingerbread man and, in doing so, made considerable gains in their own learning. Questions were suitably challenging and explanations were very clear. The teacher is highly skilled and experienced and consequently children of low prior attainment are encouraged to work at their maximum potential.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children start with limited knowledge of their world.
- Children make very good progress and achieve very well in this area of learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall with instances of excellent teaching.

Commentary

58. Children enter the Nursery with very limited knowledge of their world. The quality of teaching and learning in both the Nursery and Reception class is very good with instances of excellent teaching. As a result, children make very good progress during their time in the Foundation Stage. They achieved the expected goals in this area of learning at the end of the last school year.
59. In a very good session taken by the nursery nurse, for example, children in the Nursery showed curiosity and developed confidence very well by using their sense of touch to feel objects in the 'Feelie bag'. Excellent teaching in the Nursery challenges children to identify the different colours that they can see in soap bubbles. Photographic evidence shows the very effective use of rich learning experiences such as observing a butterfly develop and chicks hatch in an incubator. Children are all fully involved in recording these developments by using simple drawings. During the

inspection, the nursery nurse skilfully encouraged children to be aware of the sense of touch. Children in the Nursery are guided to slip their hands into the 'Feelie' bag and to identify the objects inside. Very good progress was observed during the inspection. Children in the Reception class learn to identify and use all their senses touching, smelling, tasting, seeing and hearing. They show curiosity and confidence trying to guess the food in the cup such as coffee, onions, and lemon. There are very good opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and skill using the computer in both classes. In the Reception class, children use the mouse and confidently move objects around the screen. Reception children successfully wrote simple sentences to accompany their pictures of 'Floppy'. Both classes promote stimulating activities so that children make very good gains in learning about their world.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children make very good progress in handling tools and materials.
- All adults make good use of the limited outdoor space to develop physical skills, but the limited space inhibits the physical development of children in the Reception Year.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the outdoor sessions is good.

Commentary

60. There are very good opportunities in both the Nursery and the Reception class for children to develop their ability to hold paintbrushes, pencils and crayons. Children learn to handle small tools and manipulate objects with increasing control and confidence. There is very good progression from the Nursery to the Reception class, and expectations for achievement are very clear. In the Nursery, children enjoy hammering nails into wood and they extend their skills well in the Reception class by using a small saw to alter the size of the wood and learning to join wood. There are good opportunities for children to develop their physical skills in the Nursery during the outdoor play sessions. Nursery children learn to balance, jump, climb, aim and to throw beanbags into hoops. The limited space reduces opportunities for children in the Reception class to develop their physical skills further.
61. The outside area has been established and developed since the previous inspection and, while this is an improvement, there is still scope for further development as the space is limited. The Reception class uses the hall for indoor sessions but none of these were observed during the inspection. Photographic evidence shows that good use is made of the hall, and Reception children learn to climb, jump, balance, throw and catch.
62. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is good and the Reception teacher emphasises language well by encouraging children to crawl through the tunnel, balance along the bench and jump onto the mat. Children learn to consolidate their understanding of language well alongside their physical skills because the teacher is very aware of language. Standards are typical for children of this age, and children are all on course to achieve the expected goals by the end of the Reception Year, which

represents good achievement overall. The limited outdoor facilities prevent achievement from being very good.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in both the Nursery and the Reception classes achieve very well in creative development.
- Children experience interesting activities which develop their imagination very effectively because the quality of teaching is very good.

Commentary

63. Children have very good opportunities to develop their creative skills through role-play, art and design, and music. Music resources are easily accessible for children to explore. Observations in the classrooms show that children experience a rich range of materials and techniques. From the time that they enter the Nursery, children learn to mix and use paint to create pictures and patterns. They are encouraged to use their imaginations well. Nursery children use colour well to paint characters from Jack and the Beanstalk, for example. They learn to mix the paint, and know that white will make the colour lighter. Nursery children showed great delight as they created darker and lighter shades of green and pink. They showed very good progress in their pencil drawings of a butterfly's development. Reception children created their own picture in the style of Claude Monet's Japanese bridge using crayons and wax resist. All children enjoy the role-play areas and these make a significant contribution to children developing their imagination and ideas. Children in the Nursery use their imagination well, for example, when caring for the toy cat and when preparing a meal for others. In the Reception class, children learn to communicate with each other and to organise how they will buy and sell in the grocery shop.
64. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Children are taught how to apply paint to their brushes in the Nursery through a simple song and they are encouraged to sing as they use the paint. They enjoy singing alongside the Nursery teacher. The current Reception children are not yet achieving the expected goals, but an analysis of previous work shows that they are at the level expected at this stage of the school year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well throughout the school and make very good progress in their learning overall.

- The quality of teaching over time is very good and interesting learning activities motivate pupils so that they put considerable effort into their work.
- The school's excellent systems for assessment and the setting of targets for pupils promote achievement very effectively because the subject is led and managed very well.
- Pupils complete a very good amount of work of different kinds and take care with the presentation of their work.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good, as is that for the very few pupils who speak English as an additional language: as a result, they achieve very well.

Commentary

65. Standards seen in lessons are above average in Years 2 and 6 for this stage of the school year. This represents very good achievement. Standards are similar to those found at the time of the school's previous inspection, but progress has improved because of the very low starting point for many pupils. This is because the school has improved its systems for assessing pupils' progress substantially, and information from assessments is used very effectively to promote further progress. Pupils are given very good guidance to help them to improve their work. They respond well to their teachers' high expectations. For many pupils, standards in speaking and listening are above average. Most pupils listen well and concentrate well for long periods. Similarly, most pupils express themselves well and make very good progress in speaking and explaining what they want to say. However, a minority have short concentration spans and their listening skills are average and, for a small number, below average. Their difficulties are mostly recognised in their individual education plans and the school puts considerable effort into improving their skills. As a result, by Year 6, standards in speaking and listening are above average.
66. The school has made reading a priority in recent years and this has resulted in an improvement in standards. By Year 2, average and higher attaining pupils read fluently and with some expression, having the phonic skills to read words such as 'octopus'. Lower attaining pupils read relatively simple texts with understanding and are able to make good attempts to read unfamiliar words such as 'splash'. Many belong to libraries and benefit from reading regularly to adults at home. They have a good understanding of how books work and are familiar with terms such as author and illustrator. They are able to compare books and characters and explain why, for example, 'Peter Rabbit' is a favourite book. By Year 6, standards in reading are above the nationally expected level for higher attaining and average pupils. They discuss their reading intelligently and are able to compare, for example, 'Harry Potter' books with the films. Again, many visit libraries regularly. Lower attaining pupils struggle with unfamiliar words such as 'allies' and 'Bosnia' but have sufficient understanding of how sounds are blended to make a good shot at them. The school's concentration on reading means that standards have improved well throughout the school since the previous inspection.
67. An analysis of the work of pupils in Year 2 for the school year 2003-04 shows that they practised a wide range of different styles of writing and were capable of writing extended pieces. Standards of handwriting improved over the year and, for higher attaining pupils, handwriting was always very clear and neat. The presentation of

lower attaining pupils improved well over the year. All pupils developed a degree of joined writing by the end of the year. Pupils in Year 6 also completed a very wide range of work including biographies, report and journalistic writing, letters, creative and imaginative writing and analysis of poetry. There is evidence of good use of dictionaries and a thesaurus. For lower attaining pupils, spelling and grammatical accuracy are less secure. Standards in English in the national tests at the end of Year 6 were well above average in 2003, but worsened in 2004 because one third of the pupils in the year group had special educational needs. Evidence from the inspection and from the school's assessments suggests that standards will improve in 2005.

68. Pupils achieve very well because the quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers plan learning activities so that pupils can build on previous learning systematically. Pupils' work is carefully and thoroughly marked with suggestions for raising standards further. The planning of future lessons then reflects the priorities identified in marking. Teachers put considerable effort into planning interesting learning activities which will engage the interest of pupils so that they work with sustained concentration. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 6, very effective use was made of the computer-driven whiteboard to build up pupils' knowledge and understanding of Shakespeare in preparation for work on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Innovative teaching meant that pupils were enthusiastic and keen to participate in the different parts of the lesson. As a result, achievement was very good. Similarly, in a very good lesson in Year 2, pupils were developing a new story based on their reading of 'Owl Babies'. Again, skilled use of the computer-driven whiteboard motivated pupils very effectively and carefully graded learning tasks enabled pupils at different stages of learning to achieve very well. The school appreciates that its library provision is inadequate, but its current building programme will overcome this.
69. The very good progress that pupils make is underpinned by the school's excellent assessment systems. The marking of work focuses on helping pupils to improve and this guides the planning of pupils' future learning. Accurate marking is supported by a portfolio of work for each year group in which examples of pupils' writing are graded at National Curriculum levels with an explanation of why a particular piece of work merits a certain level. Self-assessment by pupils is helping them to identify what they need to do to raise their standards further. One year group has experimented with peer assessments where pupils evaluate each other's work. The school is learning to make use of pupils' views in helping them to improve. Introductions to lessons make the learning objectives very clear and, at the end of lessons, pupils are asked if the objectives have been achieved. They are all given targets for improvement which are stuck in their books for easy reference. These are then ticked off as they are achieved. In these ways, pupils are encouraged to monitor and evaluate their own progress. The subject co-ordinator's clear-sighted leadership has created these excellent systems, which are raising standards and pupils' achievement.
70. Pupils' learning benefits because they complete an impressive amount of work during the course of a school year. This amount of practice enables them to make very good progress and to achieve very well. They are encouraged to take care with the presentation of their work and to be proud of its appearance. However, there are few examples of word-processed work in pupils' books.

71. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language are given very good support and, as a result, achieve at the same rate as other pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs are very effectively supported both in class and in small groups withdrawn for specialist teaching. Teaching assistants are very well deployed and are very effective in supporting the learning of these pupils. Homework is used well to extend work done in class and effectively supports the learning of all pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

72. The school's work to improve the standard of pupils' writing has been supported by opportunities to write for different purposes in subjects such as geography, history, science and religious education. Speaking and listening skills are developed by opportunities for pupils to express their views in different subjects, for example, by evaluating what they have made in design and technology. Two factors contribute strongly to the school's success in developing pupils' literacy skills. These are very effective teaching of all subjects across the school and the very effective management of learning by the subject leader.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising as a result of very good teaching and interesting learning activities.
- Systems for assessing pupils' progress are excellent.
- The subject is led and managed well.
- The school has not yet focused on raising standards in mathematics, but plans are in place for it to do so.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported, as are the very few who speak English as an additional language.
- Good opportunities are created to develop numeracy skills in other subjects.

Commentary

73. The quality of teaching is very good overall and standards are rising as a result. Standards vary from one year to another because, with relatively small numbers in each year group, a few more pupils on the special educational needs register, for example, can have a significant effect on results in the national tests. In 2003 at the end of Year 6, for example, standards in mathematics were well above average because this was a particularly strong year group. In 2004, standards are likely to be below average because one third of the year group had special educational needs. However, standards at the end of Year 2 were above average in 2002 and 2003 and are likely to continue to be above average in 2004. This is because teachers are adept at making learning interesting so that pupils put a good amount of effort into their work. Evidence from the inspection is that standards remain above average in the current Year 2, and are now above average in the current Year 6. This represents good achievement.
74. This view is supported by the school's excellent systems for assessing pupils' progress. The school's systems enable it to track pupils' progress systematically and to plan future learning to enable pupils to improve their standards from their current levels of knowledge and understanding. Thorough and supportive marking shows pupils how to improve and teachers are secure in their judgements because a comprehensive subject portfolio shows clearly how pupils' work is to be measured in National Curriculum levels. The results from national tests from previous years are analysed so that any weaknesses can be identified and future learning can address them.
75. The subject leader has had this responsibility for one year. Having analysed the department's work, she now has clear plans to raise standards. She is aware that, in previous years, the school has concentrated on raising standards in English. Now the focus is switching to mathematics, and the subject leader has clear plans in place to raise standards. She has plans for the school to use information and communication technology to support learning in mathematics, to introduce a larger number of intervention groups to support pupils with particular difficulties, and to help parents to support their children's learning in mathematics more effectively. The school acknowledges that, at the end of Year 6 in the National Curriculum tests in 2004, standards worsened more in mathematics than in English. These plans are to prevent this from recurring. The subject leader is managing the situation well and is determined to improve standards in mathematics to the level already achieved in English.

76. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported very well and achieve very well. Those who have special educational needs are very well supported both in class by teaching assistants and when withdrawn for short periods for specialist help. As a result, they achieve very well. They, as do all pupils, complete an impressive amount of work, and intensive practice ensures that they reinforce what they know, understand and can do, and their future learning is planned carefully to build on what they already know.

Mathematics across the curriculum

77. Numeracy skills are developed well in other subjects. Information and communication technology is used very well to support learning in mathematics and very good examples of this were observed during the inspection. Other subjects, such as science, geography and design and technology, provide pupils with very good opportunities to practise data handling, representing and interpreting information expressed in graphical form, and measuring.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in science is very good across the school because teaching is very good.
- Pupils' good attitudes have a positive effect upon achievement.
- The school very effectively develops pupils' skills of scientific investigation and understanding of scientific method.
- Information and communication technology is used well to support learning.
- Very good leadership and management have a strong effect on achievement.

Commentary

78. Pupils develop a good understanding of science as they move through the school. In Years 1 and 2, they acquire a good understanding of a wide range of topics and standards are well above average by the end of Year 2.
79. The school has set very challenging targets for the present Year 6, and pupils are working hard to reach the targets set. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have a good understanding of a wide range of topics and a good grasp of the requirements that make a 'fair test'. Standards are well above average.
80. Very good teaching and learning ensure that pupils are enthusiastic about their work and learn well. Teachers plan lessons very well. They are careful to meet the needs of pupils with differing attainment levels. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are very well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers explain things carefully so that pupils can begin experiments with confidence. Pupils enjoy the subject and work hard because teachers make lessons interesting and exciting. They respond well to the challenging activities presented to them and the majority achieve well in lessons.
81. Teachers give good attention to developing learning through investigation. Pupils work very well together and carry out experiments carefully, discussing their results with developing understanding. In all science lessons, teachers give pupils many opportunities for discussion, making sure that pupils with special educational needs are given opportunities to contribute. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 2 were observed working effectively together in small groups to investigate a series of lunch boxes to produce a balanced diet. Pupils in Year 6 worked very well in pairs to plan and set up experiments to prove that plants need light, water and

warmth to be healthy. In both classes, discussions showed that pupils have a good understanding of scientific method. Teachers are developing the use of scientific vocabulary very well and making effective use of mathematical skills and information and communication technology to support learning.

82. In response to a recommendation made at the previous inspection, all science work is now presented well in pupils' books. Their results are presented in charts, tables and graphs, linking effectively with their mathematical skills. They always include a written report on how they carried out their experiments and this helps to develop skills in literacy. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection.
83. Learning is carefully planned to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The use of information and communication technology has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. For example, teachers use the computer-driven whiteboards very effectively to help pupils to plan their experiments according to the school's system, which helps to raise the level of attainment. Older pupils are familiar with the electron microscope and enjoy using it to observe things which cannot be seen by the naked eye. This often leads to moments of awe and wonder as they are introduced to the wonders of nature.
84. The subject is very well led and managed; the co-ordinators are very enthusiastic and knowledgeable about science. Excellent assessment systems are in place to help teachers to track pupils' progress. The results of assessments are carefully analysed to help teachers to plan future work. Resources in the subject are good and very well organised. The school is in a good position to sustain high levels of attainment in science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision in the subject is much better than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is very good.
- Teaching is now very good because teachers are confident about the areas of ICT being taught.
- Because resources are so much better, the school is able to teach a full and wide curriculum.
- Leadership by the headteacher has been very good and this has given dynamism and impetus to improvement.

Commentary

85. The school has made very significant improvements since the previous inspection. Standards in ICT are now above average at the end of Years 2 and 6, and the quality of teaching and learning is now very good. Very effective subject leadership from the headteacher has had a strong impact on achievement and teaching.

86. Pupils now achieve very well across a broad range of work in ICT. This includes the achievement of higher attaining pupils, many of whom work at a level above that expected for their age. It also promotes the progress of those who normally find work difficult. For example, three pupils in Year 1 were observed using the computer to double and halve numbers. They were well supported by a teaching assistant. These pupils got instant feedback from the computer about their achievement and this was a further stimulus to their efforts. Their ICT skills were improving rapidly as a result. A particular success of the school is its creative approach to work across the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Since the previous inspection, teachers have become enthusiastic about teaching ICT and their good level of skill acts as a strong stimulus to pupils' learning.
87. The school is making very good use of its computer suite. Although space is at a premium, it is a good facility which contributes significantly to achievement. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were observed learning about the good features of a page design before preparing a PowerPoint presentation. The teacher had very good subject knowledge and she taught with confidence, which sustained the interest and attention of the pupils so that they achieved very well. The help provided by the ICT technician is very much appreciated by the staff. The headteacher has overseen effective training and the provision of good software to complement the school's broad and balanced curriculum. This very good leadership has made a major contribution to the good improvement in this key area of learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

88. This is a particularly successful area. ICT is now used across a very wide range of subjects. Pupils have quick keyboard entry skills and this helps their desktop presentation. They use spreadsheets to enhance data logging and analysis in science, although this could usefully be extended to include more use of graphs. Computer programs are well used in subjects such as geography, history and art and design. Colourful ICT work can be seen displayed in many parts of the school. Teachers make very good use of the digital camera, especially on visits to places of interest. The investigation of the school's immediate neighbourhood by pupils in Year 4 was a particularly good example of this and enhanced pupils' learning very effectively.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Geography has a high profile in the school.
- Pupils achieve well and standards are above average at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The subject is well planned and very good use is made of local resources, visits and visitors.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good throughout the school and the subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

89. Standards are above those expected for pupils of their age at the end of Years 2 and 6, and all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well. Geography has a high profile around the school and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. There are attractive and informative geography displays in all classrooms. Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained but the school has improved the quality and quantity of the learning resources available.
90. The planning of learning is very good and ensures that all pupils benefit from an interesting curriculum. Visits and the very effective use of the local area greatly enrich learning throughout the school. An analysis of pupils' work and discussions with pupils show that literacy and mathematical skills are developed well in geography lessons. For example, pupils in Year 2 have produced a bar chart to show differences in the flow of local traffic. Similarly, pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of how people can cause damage to their environment and appreciate the effects of environmental change.
91. Pupils have expressed concern about local graffiti, rubbish and environmental pollution. Pupils in Year 5 used their literacy skills to write letters to the local council, suggesting ways to deal with environmental problems. As a result, the school won £1000 for suggesting ideas to bring about environmental improvement in the local area. Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of the effects of pollution and higher attaining pupils talk sensibly about international concerns about the ozone layer. They suggest ways to deal with the problem such as reducing the amount of rubbish generated and limiting the number of cars on the road. They understand the significance of maps and plans and talk knowledgably about how to use them.
92. During the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was good. For example, in one lesson, the teacher used a range of interesting ways to help pupils to learn and to consolidate their knowledge about river formation and features. Most pupils were able to discuss the features of a river and how they developed over time. Information and communication technology was used effectively to enhance learning and pupils were all motivated by the prospect of preparing a presentation about river formation and features. Pupils have good opportunities to develop and use their geographical skills when taking part in orienteering during a trip to Gibside.
93. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a clear plan for development and the school has worked hard to improve the range of learning resources since the previous inspection. There is an attractive portfolio of pupils' work which helps staff to ensure that learning is at the right level.

History

The provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and standards are above average at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The subject is well planned and very good use is made of local resources, visits and visitors.
- Teaching and learning are good and the subject is led and managed very well.

Commentary

94. Standards are above those expected for pupils of their age at the end of Years 2 and 6, and pupils achieve well. As they progress through the school, pupils enjoy a very carefully planned curriculum which enables them to learn about significant people, events and places from both the recent and more distant past and to use different sources of information to help them investigate the past. The subject is prominent around the school and all classrooms have attractive and informative history displays. The local area is used well to enrich learning and there is a good range of visits and visitors. Since the previous inspection, standards and the quality of teaching and learning have been maintained but the planning of learning now provides more opportunities for recording work.
95. Discussions with pupils in Years 2, 3 and 6 show that learning about history has had a significant impact on them. All pupils enjoy history and talk about it with enthusiasm because they have enjoyed visits and these have helped to make learning enjoyable and memorable. Pupils in Year 2, for example, have dressed up in Victorian clothes during their history trip. They talked about school in olden times and identified the differences with the present day. Pupils in Year 3 have visited a local Roman site and experienced being archaeologists for the day, digging for artefacts and carefully examining their finds. Pupils in Year 6 talked well about the effects of the industrial revolution and show a good understanding of the effects of the steam train on the lives of people.
96. Information and communication technology, geographical and literacy skills are all used well to enhance learning. For example, pupils in Year 3 have used local maps from 1858/1894 and 1919 to trace the changes in facilities and development of the local park while those in Year 4 have used the digital camera to identify different historical buildings. In Year 6, pupils have engaged in research using their information and communication technology skills to complete a detailed historical study of the local area.
97. During the inspection, teaching and learning were good in the lessons observed. Pupils made good progress and achieved well because teachers used skilful questioning to test and extend knowledge and understanding and had planned the lesson to interest pupils at different stages of learning. Sources of information such as old and new teddy bears were available for pupils in Year 1, and these helped them to identify the old, oldest and new teddy bear. Pupils learned to use sources of evidence to give information about the bears. Pupils in Year 3 handled and investigated resources and artefacts successfully to gain more information about Ancient Egypt.
98. The subject is very well led and managed. The subject leader ensures that learning is enriched by the good use of literacy, geography and information and communication technology skills.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were sampled, and no judgement is made on the quality of teaching.

99. From an analysis of pupils' portfolios of work and observation of work on display throughout the school, it is evident that **art and design** is well established in the school's curriculum. Overall, standards in the work seen are above those expected nationally and pupils throughout the school achieve well. Art and design is used very effectively to support other subjects. Drawings, prints and collages are attractively displayed around the school, where they serve to inspire others and to fire the imagination. Information and communication technology is used well in art and design. For example, pupils in Year 5 had found examples of Lowry's work on the Internet before painting landscapes of Victorian times as part of their history project. Resources for learning are satisfactory and the subject is well led and managed. In discussions, pupils discussed their work in art and design with considerable enthusiasm.
100. Standards of completed work seen in **design and technology** are average. Completed work includes some links with other subjects. For example, mathematical skills are well used in measuring and drawing plans to scale and pupils make good use of literacy skills to label plans, write instructions and when evaluating their work. Pupils in Year 6 took part in an exciting video-conference at the end of the last school year when they discussed their designs for fridge magnets, which they had made with staff and pupils in the high school to which they were about to transfer. They then visited the school to see their designs manufactured. The subject is well led and managed so that pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject. Resources for learning are satisfactory.
101. In **music**, whole school singing in assemblies is average. Music is used widely in the school, for example in assemblies and parish work. An annual whole school Christmas performance in church uses music so that pupils get valuable experience in performing before an audience. Pupils have opportunities to learn guitar and woodwind instruments in school and a good number take advantage of this. The subject leader ensures that the National Curriculum is covered and links with information and communication technology have improved well since the previous inspection.
102. In **physical education**, standards in swimming are above average because pupils have good opportunities for swimming tuition in Years 2, 3 and 4. The school has no playing field, but Years 4, 5 and 6 have opportunities to use a nearby field for part of the year. The full National Curriculum is covered and pupils benefit from external coaching in a number of games. There are limited opportunities for competitive games against other schools and in local athletics and swimming events. Pupils in Year 3 have an opportunity for country dancing.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship (PHSEC) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision is planned very well within the curriculum and pupils' achievement is very good.
- Very good teaching results in high standards.
- All staff give very good support to the school's programmes for promoting pupils' personal development through their own conduct and relationships.
- There is very good leadership by the headteacher, who regards the school provision in PHSEC as central to the school's ethos.

Commentary

103. The school makes very good provision for teaching citizenship and for personal, social and health education. The planned provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to share opinions in lessons and this increases their confidence and feeling of self-worth very effectively. As a result, achievement is very good. Years 5 and 6 elect representatives onto the school council and this valuable opportunity to learn more about citizenship is soon to be extended to include younger pupils. Pupils learn about the importance of a healthy diet in science and about the importance of exercise on their bodies in physical education. They discuss how to lead a purposeful life and how to manage the benefits and dangers of different substances. Very good teaching overall results in pupils' standards being well above those expected nationally. A major factor in promoting these very high standards is the school's Catholic roots, and pupils have a very clear awareness of the way in which they are valued in the 'family of the parish'.

104. The school sees pupils' personal development as a key element in its work. The planned programme helps pupils to develop a safe and healthy lifestyle. They gain in confidence and self-esteem and interact well with others. For example, pupils co-operate very well with each other when carrying out investigations in science. Pupils are provided with very good examples of how to behave and how to react to each other by all adults in the school. The influence of the church makes a significant contribution to the pupils' growing sense of maturity and responsibility. Pupils' clear awareness of high expectations makes a strong contribution to pupils' good behaviour and attitude in lessons and, as a result, contributes very well to the quality of learning and pupils' achievement. Parents appreciate all that the school does in this area of the curriculum, and the very effective leadership which the headteacher provides for their children's well-being and personal development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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