

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY FAMILY RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Oldham

LEA area: Oldham

Unique reference number: 105724

Headteacher: Mrs Collette Gill

Lead inspector: Mrs Barbara E Doughty

Dates of inspection: 18th – 21st October 2004

Inspection number: 267052

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 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	149
School address:	Lime Green Road Oldham Lancashire
Postcode:	OL8 3NG
Telephone number:	0161 6522400
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Barry J Lomax

Date of previous inspection: 7th June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a smaller than average Roman Catholic primary school with 149 pupils. There is a fairly even mix of boys and girls. Children's attainment on entry to the Nursery class at the age of three has declined in recent years and is now well below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is much higher than in most other schools; nearly all of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behaviour difficulties. Five have statements of specific need, which include severe learning difficulties. Almost all of the pupils are from white-English speaking families; around one per cent have English as an additional language. The area the school draws from is one of significant social and economic deprivation and there is a high number of vulnerable pupils living in extremely difficult circumstances. This is reflected in a well above average take-up of free school meals, which is rising and is now over 50 per cent.

The school received a school achievement award in 2002 and is involved in several national and local initiatives including: Excellence in Cities; the Leadership Development Strategy; Single Regeneration; the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Support Programme; and Sure Start. There are numeracy and art family learning projects currently running at the school. During the last year, a new head teacher and deputy have been appointed, and since the last inspection, there have been seven new members of staff.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22261	Mrs Barbara E Doughty	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage curriculum Science Special educational needs English as an additional language
14141	Mr Ernie Marshall	Lay inspector	
30398	Mr Chris Scola	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology History Geography
24895	Mrs Kath Hurt	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This school does a reasonably effective job and gives satisfactory value for money. Standards are below average but, because of satisfactory teaching and despite some significant barriers to learning, pupils achieve well enough by the end of the school. The school is competently led and despite some challenging situations slowing the pace of change, the new head teacher and her deputy know what needs doing and, with help from local education authority consultants, are dealing with the weaknesses. The school is improving steadily and is poised for further improvement as new systems and procedures start to bite.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement in literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) is good due to effective teaching, but standards in speaking and listening are unsatisfactory.
- Standards are below average in mathematics and science because of weak mental calculation and underdeveloped investigation skills.
- Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6 and very good in Years 5 and 6, but elsewhere, insufficient use is made of assessment information to plan what pupils need to learn next.
- The school has good plans for improvement but is not yet doing enough to check on its strengths and weaknesses.
- The school very successfully promotes very good behaviour and attitudes.
- Support for vulnerable pupils, pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language is good.

The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection. Despite significant staff changes and recruitment and retention difficulties that have slowed the pace of change, most of the key issues have been dealt with. Pupils achieve better than they did in English and ICT; curriculum planning and the provision for special educational needs and vulnerable pupils have improved; and the provision for personal development is better than it was. However, assessment remains an issue, as does the subject leaders' involvement in checking teaching and learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	E	C	E	C
Mathematics	E	D	E*	E
Science	E	E	E	E

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

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

Although test results are usually well below the national average at the end of Year 6, and in 2004 this school was amongst the lowest scoring schools in the country in mathematics, the trend over time has been one of continual improvement with results rising faster than nationally. From the work seen, pupils' achievement is **satisfactory**, especially given their low attainment

on entry, the high incidence of special needs, and the significant number of vulnerable pupils. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well in English and the work seen in reading and writing is currently as expected nationally, although speaking and listening skills could be better. In mathematics and science, not enough pupils reach the nationally expected level because improvements have been slower to come about and are only just starting to bite. Nevertheless from the work seen, achievement in both subjects is now satisfactory. It is not such a positive picture in Years 1 and 2, however, where the teaching is not as effective; standards are below average in reading, writing, mathematics and science and pupils' achievement is barely satisfactory. Similarly, in Nursery and Reception classes although children make satisfactory progress, they do not reach the goals they are expected to by the end of the Reception Year, except in personal, social and emotional development, where achievement is good, and physical and creative development where attainment broadly reflects that on entry. Throughout the school, pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are **very good**. Attitudes and behaviour are very good; attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall and good in Years 3 to 6. All teachers have a secure understanding of the curriculum and the teaching of basic skills. They make work interesting enough from the Nursery to Year 4 and extremely exciting in Years 5 and 6; pupils work productively because of this. Relationships are very good and staff show extreme sensitivity and understanding to those pupils with learning and personal difficulties; these pupils do well given the problems they face. Work is marked regularly and pupils are aware of what they have achieved. However, in the Nursery and Reception classes and Years 1 and 2, teaching makes insufficient use of assessment information to tailor work for individual pupils.

The school's curriculum is satisfactory and the provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. The school has satisfactory partnership with parents and good links with other schools and colleges.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. Governance is sound and the governing body meets its statutory duties fully. The head teacher has a clear view of where the school needs to be and what needs to be done, embodied in a good school development plan. However, recent developments, like the new tracking system to check on inconsistencies in pupils' progress, have not yet had time to raise standards enough. Management is satisfactory and improving, but checks on teaching are not yet thorough or systematic enough; weaker aspects of teaching and learning are not being eliminated fast enough and the best practice is not being shared. Governors are very supportive of the work of the school, but are not active enough in decision making and checking the school's effectiveness because they rely too heavily on the head teacher for guidance.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils are very happy with the school. They enjoy coming and are comfortable about asking adults for help. Parents hold the school in good regard and most are happy with the quality of education and the level of care the school provides.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards, in particular in speaking and listening, mathematics and science.
- Improve the use of assessment to tailor pupils' work more effectively to meet the needs of children in the Nursery and Reception classes and Years 1 and 2.
- Enable staff and governors to monitor teaching, learning and pupils' progress more effectively.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Even though standards are below average by the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and ICT, and satisfactorily in mathematics and science, but they do not do well enough in speaking and listening. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in reading and writing, but their speaking skills are below the expected level.
- Improvements to teaching and resources in ICT have brought about good achievement and a rise in standards.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is good.
- Children in the Nursery class make good progress in personal, social and emotional development.
- Recent improvements in the provision for the most able pupils in Year 2 mean that these pupils are now working at the right level.
- Pupils' knowledge of multiplication tables and their calculation skills are insufficiently developed.
- Year 1 and 2 pupils' scientific investigation skills are not as good as they should be.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	12.9 (13.1)	15.9 (15.7)
Writing	12.1 (11.9)	14.8 (14.6)
Mathematics	13.2 (13.4)	16.4 (16.3)

There were 16 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 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.9 (27.0)	27.0 (26.8)
Mathematics	23.3 (26.5)	27.2 (26.8)
Science	25.5 (26.5)	28.9 (28.6)

There were 26 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. In the 2004 tests, Year 2 pupils did not do as well as all other schools nationally, and this school was amongst the lowest scoring schools in the country in mathematics. However, that year, only 16 pupils took the tests, making the comparisons with what happened in other schools unreliable. There is also a well above average percentage of pupils with

special educational needs and an increasingly high number of very vulnerable pupils who struggle to learn, reflected in the rising number of pupils on free school meals (65 per cent in Year 2 in 2003 and 2004) and the declining attainment on entry to the Nursery class. From the work pupils are doing now in Year 2, their achievement is satisfactory.

2. In contrast to the Year 2 tests results, which have declined over time, the trend in the Year 6 results has been one of improvement, with results rising faster than in most other schools. Historically at this school, pupils tend to do better in the Year 6 tests than they do in the Year 2 tests. In 2003, the English results were in line with the national average, but below it in mathematics and well below it in science. Results were below those of similar schools, but because of very good Year 2 reading results back in 1999, this school was unfairly placed in a higher comparative group than it should have been. In reality, these pupils achieved as well as could reasonably be expected from Year 2 to Year 6. Although, between 2003 and 2004, test results fell, this mirrored the fall in the Year 2 results between 1999 and 2000. Comparison of individual Year 2 pupils' results with their Year 6 results shows that, in 2004, most pupils achieved satisfactorily in English and science, but did not do as well as could reasonably be expected in mathematics, mainly because of weak calculation skills. This weakness is now being successfully tackled by the senior managers, with intensive support from local education authority consultants, and there are secure signs of improvement.
3. By the end of the Reception class, in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding, children do not reach the goals that they are expected to reach nationally, although their achievement is satisfactory. Most children achieve well in personal, social and emotional development, mostly due to the good start they get off to in the Nursery class. They achieve satisfactorily in physical and creative development, to reach the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.
4. Children start in the Nursery class with particularly poor speaking skills. Many children find it hard to communicate using words, a large proportion of them resorting to hand gestures and utterances. Although pupils' communication skills improve by the end of the school, they are still below average. With not so much time as they have in writing lessons to think of effective words to use, many pupils struggle to formulate, in an instance, their responses to questions or comments. Nor do they always have time to listen carefully to what others are saying or to the questions they are being asked. Their sentence structure and grammar skills are weak and their words do not always say precisely enough what they mean.
5. The best and most rapid progress is made in reading, writing and ICT and in Years 3 and 6. These year groups are where the most effective teaching is seen, which is one of the reasons why the senior managers made the decision to put this year's most able Year 2 pupils into the Year 3 class, where they are being well challenged and are now working at the level appropriate to their ability. This year, for the first time in a number of years, some Year 2 pupils, about a fifth of them, are on course to reach above the expected level in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
6. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are supported well in lessons by teachers and support staff. Vulnerable pupils have the opportunity to work with the school's learning mentor, who, through her patience, understanding and sensitivity, gives these pupils the chance to talk about and deal

successfully with their anger and frustrations at not being able to cope with the routines of school or learn as quickly as some of their more fortunate classmates.

7. Recent improvements to ICT hardware and software and specialist teaching mean that pupils do well in ICT and standards have risen. Because teachers and support staff watch the specialist teaching, they are able to replicate this effective style of teaching and are now more effective than ever before at supporting pupils' learning.
8. The historical underachievement in mathematics has been pursued and, with help from the local education authority consultants, is being successfully tackled, and pupils are now achieving satisfactorily. However, pupils' recall of multiplication facts is too slow, which in turn affects the speed and accuracy of their mental calculations. Similarly, past weaknesses in the amount and quality of investigative science work pupils were asked to do are currently being dealt with, but there is still a lot of catching up to do in Years 3 to 6, and still too few opportunities in Years 1 and 2 for pupils to carry out investigations, slowing progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The school is very successful in promoting very good attitudes to school and very good behaviour, supported by the very good provision the school makes for their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils behave very well because of the school's very good guidance, high expectations, and very clear rules.
- Pupils work very hard in lessons and help each other with their work.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and contributes towards the very positive and inclusive ethos of the school.
- The school deals well with any isolated incidents of bullying and other forms of harassment.

Commentary

9. Behaviour is very good. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner showing consideration to others. Boys and girls play together very sensibly and enjoy the uncrowded playground because of good timetabling for its use. Pupils and the great majority of parents say there is no significant bullying, racism, or sexist behaviour; none were seen during the inspection. Although last year there were seven exclusions involving five different pupils, there have been none this year. This is because of improved procedures for dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Most of these pupils have moved on to the secondary school, but those still here are behaving better mainly because of the work of the learning mentor, who helps pupils to understand the impact of their inappropriate behaviour on their own learning and that of others.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Chinese

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
156	7	0
1	0	0

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

10. Pupils have a very good understanding of what is right and wrong and what to do if minor squabbles break out or accidents happen. The consistent and very positive approach to behaviour management of all members of staff and the prompt, thorough, sensitive and effective intervention to address any potential issues ensure high standards of behaviour. The use of praise and rewards has a very positive impact on behaviour and attitudes in almost all lessons. All pupils and adults work together very well. The learning mentor gives very good support to pupils who have particular behaviour difficulties, helping them to overcome their barriers to learning.
11. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and to work. Pupils of all ages and abilities are keen to learn. They enjoy taking part in the full range of activities provided by the school and the vast majority of pupils are well motivated and enthusiastic. Throughout the school pupils are very attentive during lessons and virtually all listen very well to one another and their teachers. In Years 3 to 6, and especially in Years 5 and 6, pupils take a pride in the

presentation of their work. Very good relationships between pupils and adults create a very positive ethos for learning. Because of very good personal education, pupils are very considerate to one another, demonstrated by the very good level of support pupils give to each other. For example, when pupils with special educational needs require a bit of extra help their classmates are there to support them, enabling these pupils to be fully integrated into all aspects of school life.

12. The school enhances pupils' very positive attitudes through its very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, underpinned by a very strong personal, social, and health education curriculum. The provision for pupils' cultural development has improved since the last inspection. This is because very good links across the curriculum increase pupils' understanding and appreciation of other cultures and religions and cultural awareness is promoted very well through art, literature, music, and drama and poetry activities. Very good provision for teaching pupils the meaning of citizenship is also included within this curriculum and pupils are well informed about many current issues such as the need to manage personal finances efficiently. Led mainly by Year 6 pupils, the school council makes some constructive suggestions that are acted upon by staff. Pupils help fundraise for a range of charities. They undertake a wide range of duties that ensure the smooth running of the school. Pupils respond well to opportunities provided for them to reflect on wonders and variety of life. This was seen in a very good assembly led by Year 5 pupils.

13. The most up-to-date attendance figures show that attendance is line with the national average. Records are used efficiently to monitor absences, and unauthorised absence is low.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.4
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching is sound with good teaching in English and ICT and very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and for raising their awareness of citizenship. Pupils are well cared for, and the school has established an effective partnership with parents, who are very happy with what the school does for, and offers to, their children.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory and because of this, pupils' learning is sound. The quality of teaching is good in Years 3 to 6, and satisfactory in the younger classes. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn well between Year 3 and Year 6, and very well in Years 5 and 6.

- Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are taught well.
- Very good relationships throughout the school mean pupils enjoy coming to school and work hard.
- Good teaching in literacy and specialist teaching in ICT is bringing about improved standards and good achievement in both subjects.
- Too few opportunities are given from the Reception Year to Year 4 for pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills.
- In the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, assessment information is not used effectively to tailor work to meet pupils' needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (3%)	6 (20%)	5 (17%)	17 (57%)	1 (3%)	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 were seen.

14. The teaching in Years 5 and 6 is inspirational and dynamic. Teachers' explanations are crystal clear, which means that pupils know what they are doing and how to do it. Comments in pupils' workbooks give pupils pointers for improvement and help them to achieve higher standards next time. Teachers have high expectations about what pupils can achieve, which means that pupils are well challenged. Effective deployment of learning support assistants means that pupils have as much help with their work as possible and the least able can do the work. In contrast to what happens elsewhere in the school, pupils in Years 5 and 6 get many opportunities to talk about what they are doing and how they are doing it. Teachers in these year groups encourage pupils to talk about issues relating, for example, to everyday life and give them time to think about what they want to say and how they are going to phrase their comments. This does not happen as well as it could from the Reception Year to Year 4, however, which means that pupils' speaking skills are not promoted or developed as well as they could be by the time the pupils leave the school.
15. The teaching of literacy and ICT is good. Specialist teaching in ICT is bringing about improved standards; the decision to deploy a technician to help teachers gain greater knowledge of how to teach ICT more effectively is working well. In literacy, the national teaching guidelines are made good use of, giving teachers a good understanding of what pupils of different ages need to learn. The teaching of basic reading and writing skills is accurate throughout the school and is very good in Years 5 and 6. However, pupils of all ages often find it hard to interpret what they read and hear and to find the words that would explain more clearly what they mean. Whilst teachers in Years 5 and 6 have good regard to these difficulties, and the teaching of language skills is good in these two classes, from the Reception Year to Year 4 pupils have insufficient time and opportunity to clarify their thinking and explain their ideas. This means that standards in speaking and listening are too low and pupils do not achieve as well as they could.
16. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve well. This is because, in Years 3 to 6, the work is usually tailored to meet their needs and in the younger classes, support assistants help them to do the work. Those with statements of specific need are supported very well.
17. Teachers' excellent rapport with pupils in Years 5 and 6 and their very good relationships in the other years mean that pupils work hard to please the teachers. Pupils enjoy coming to this school and talk positively about how they can ask if they need help and are not made to feel awkward or embarrassed.
18. The difference between the satisfactory progress pupils make in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, and the good progress they make in Years 3 and 6, is due mainly to differences in the quality of teaching, which in turn affect the way pupils learn and the rate at which they achieve. All of the very good lessons seen were in Years 5 and 6, and there

were some good lessons in Years 3 and 4. In contrast, the lessons seen in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 were mostly satisfactory. In these years, relationships are good and children enjoy their work. In the Nursery class, they learn the routines of school well and this is developed successfully in the Reception class. In Years 1 and 2, there is a calmness that helps pupils to concentrate and work is appropriate for the pupils' ages. However, teaching takes insufficient account of what pupils already know, can do, and understand. For example, in the Nursery and Reception classes, some children are asked to write letters and numbers before they have the skills to do so. In the Reception class, during the 'free choice' times in particular, adults do not intervene enough in children's play, some of the activities lack specific purpose and challenge, and children too often choose things they are good at rather than those that would help them to acquire or improve a particular skill. This is because teaching does little to help children to understand what they need to learn next. In Years 1 and 2, there is an over-reliance on mathematics worksheets, insufficient expectations for the most able pupils, occasionally work which has limited purpose, and cursory marking that has little impact on improvement.

The curriculum

The curriculum and opportunities for enrichment are satisfactory. Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Since the most recent inspection, there has been good improvement in the ICT curriculum.
- Good links between subjects promote learning across the curriculum.
- Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship is very good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- There are insufficient planned opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills from the Reception Year to Year 4, or to promote mathematical problem-solving and scientific investigation skills in the Reception Year and Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

19. The curriculum has improved satisfactorily since the previous inspection. Teachers in Years 1 to 6 now use the national teaching guidance to help them to plan for all subjects and ensure that knowledge and skills are taught to pupils in a clear sequence. This has particularly benefited achievement in English and brought about improvements to the ICT curriculum, which have been particularly good. As a result, standards in both subjects have improved and pupils now achieve well. Detailed subject guidance now ensures that all aspects of the ICT curriculum are taught. Resources in ICT have been greatly improved and teachers are much more skilled at teaching and using ICT to support learning. The school uses topics well to interlink different subjects and older pupils learn French. Pupils of all ages participate in musical and dramatic performances in school concerts and have opportunities to work with authors, musicians and drama groups. A satisfactory range of visits supports learning, for example in history and geography.
20. The curriculum supports the personal development of pupils very well. This too has improved since the last inspection. This is now a 'healthy eating' school that emphasises the importance of a healthy life style. In the humanities, there is a great emphasis on respecting and celebrating different cultures so that pupils appreciate cultures that are

very different and respect their values and beliefs. This sensitivity is further developed to combat any sort of racism and the pupils talk enthusiastically about work they have done with a local football club to keep racism out of football. A learning mentor works very successfully with individual pupils to address their barriers to learning, giving them ways to manage anger, and raising self-esteem. Good work has been done to make pupils more aware of the dangers of drug abuse and the difficulties faced by vulnerable people in our society. Citizenship is also taught very effectively and pupils are well informed and able to express their views about controversial issues that face Britain and the world.

21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. It is well planned, effective and meets the recommendations of the national code of practice. Pupils' individual education plans are detailed and thorough. They contain appropriate targets, which are communicated well to relevant staff. The expertise of outside agencies is called in when necessary and used effectively to inform teaching. The learning mentor gives very good support to pupils who have particular behaviour difficulties.
22. Although pupils are able to work very collaboratively in groups, in Years 1 and 2 there are not enough opportunities given to them to take advantage of these good social skills and plan their own learning. This particularly applies in mathematics and science. For example, setting up an experiment in science tends to be very teacher directed and pupils often have too few opportunities to plan and set up their own investigations. From the Reception Year to Year 4, not enough is done to promote and develop pupils' speaking and listening skills, slowing progress in this subject and in the Nursery and Reception classes not enough regard is given to the national teaching guidelines to sequence children's early learning as well as it might be.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes good care of the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Staff give pupils good advice and support in their personal development, and the support, advice and guidance they give pupils about their academic progress is satisfactory overall. The school satisfactorily consults pupils, and values and acts on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good support provided by the learning mentor contributes positively to helping pupils with learning difficulties to be able to address them and make good progress.
- Very good relationships give pupils the confidence to approach adults when in need of advice.
- Good pastoral care ensures pupils work and play in a safe environment.
- Effective induction arrangements into the Nursery class help children settle quickly into school.

Commentary

23. This is a school where staff know their pupils as individuals and show them care and respect. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils develop mature and responsible attitudes to both their work and each other. A significant number of pupils, for varying reasons, have some difficulty with learning and require additional support. The school has managed to secure the appointment of a learning mentor whose role is to work with each pupil in difficulty, build up a confident relationship with them, and plan individual work that will

enable each of these pupils to move forward. Her work in particular is very effective in developing pupils' self esteem, encouraging them to overcome their barriers to learning, and to begin to make good progress.

24. The care and respect staff show to their pupils are received well and result in the establishment of very good relationships that promote learning. Pupils feel able to approach staff if they are worried or concerned. They know that they will be listened to sympathetically and that teachers will give the best advice or guidance they can.
25. The staff and governing body work together to ensure all the statutory requirements for health, safety and welfare, including arrangements for child protection, are met fully. Fire safety and prevention equipment is checked and regular fire drills held. Electrical and large physical education equipment is checked regularly. First aid arrangements and records are good. Pupils' medicines are properly controlled and pupils are well supervised inside and outside the classroom. Dispersal at the end of the school day is controlled to ensure all younger pupils are met by known parents or carers.
26. Induction into the Nursery class is well planned. The nursery assistant in charge of the Nursery class visits the local playgroups to promote the school. All interested parents are invited to meet the head teacher and are given a full description of what is offered and taught. A detailed information booklet is issued and describes how parents can help their children to settle into school.
27. The school combines the Nursery induction with the Year 6 leavers' day visit to the secondary schools and takes the opportunity to move every class into the next year group classroom for an activity day taken by their 'new' teacher. This gives pupils an early insight into their future work and good opportunity to get to know the teacher.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents and the community is satisfactory. Links with other schools and colleges are good and used well to enhance pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's quick response to complaints or problems is valued and appreciated by parents.
- Effective transfer process for pupils entering the secondary schools enables them to make a confident start.
- The school's well-established links with other schools and colleges provide good sources of staff training and additional finance and support for pupils' learning.
- Parents of Reception-aged children do not get enough information about what is going on in the Reception class and a small minority are justifiably concerned by this.

Commentary

28. Most parents express very positive views of the school and show appreciation of the efforts of the staff in educating and developing their children both academically and personally. Parents show reliance and confidence in the head teacher's willingness and ability to respond quickly and fairly to their concerns. Parents feel comfortable in approaching the school.

29. Pupils leaving at the end of Year 6 transfer to one of three secondary schools in the area. The close co-operation between them and this school ensures that Year 6 pupils transfer with as much ease as is possible and are able to enjoy good continuity in their learning. Links with other local primary schools are effective in providing good opportunities for staff training and development. Joint in-service training days enable teachers to compare experiences and share best practice initiatives. One of the Nursery class nursery assistants attends the joint meetings of the five schools participating in the 'Sure Start' initiative and is developing good pre-school links as a result. The school participates in two central government schemes that both help to provide funding for additional resources such as the learning mentor. Links with a local university and local colleges provide additional adult support in the classroom when students take up work experience placements.
30. Some parents of Reception-aged children have expressed concern and disappointment at the lack of information about what is being taught and the lack of opportunity to see what their children are doing. Their concerns are justified because of the current closed-door policy and parents' lack of access to the classroom.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership of the head teacher, senior team and other staff with responsibilities is sound. Management and governance are both satisfactory. The governing body meet their statutory requirements fully.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In a short time the head teacher has reinvigorated a good sense of teamwork among staff and purposeful atmosphere where all pupils are fully included and valued.
- A recently established plan for school development provides a good steer for improvement, but it has not yet had time to impact sufficiently on standards because developments are still in their infancy.
- Governors are very supportive but they rely too heavily on the head teacher for guidance because they do not do enough to check and evaluate the school's effectiveness for themselves.
- Senior managers and subject co-ordinators are not thorough enough in checking the quality of teaching and learning so that the features of effective teaching are identified and adopted by all, and so that weaknesses that slow pupils' progress are quickly eliminated.

Commentary

31. Since the last inspection there have been significant changes in staffing and some disruption caused by staff absence that have slowed the school's drive to school improvement. Since her appointment, just a year ago, the head teacher has quickly ensured a good sense of teamwork among the staff who show a strong commitment to improvement. Recent teacher appointments have successfully boosted the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6. This has enabled the head teacher to establish a calm and orderly atmosphere in school, where pupils are obviously keen to learn. Her first priority in establishing very good attitudes and behaviour among pupils has been most successful. There is a strong commitment to inclusion. The head teacher works tirelessly with her staff in meeting the wide-ranging needs of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational and emotional needs in the school, and there is a very caring and protective atmosphere. The recent establishment of senior management and primary leadership project teams

has led to better delegation of responsibilities. Staff are more accountable for the school's effectiveness and involved in action planning than they were. However, whilst these teams have good potential, they are in the early stages of development and not yet as effective as they might be because many of the staff are relatively new to their roles.

32. The head teacher and staff are clear about what needs to improve and how they will go about it. The new development plan was devised through a process of staff discussions and review of the school's work. It is a good document that identifies the right priorities to move the school forward over the next few years. Responsibilities for developments are well defined, and action plans are clear and carefully paced. The school has received effective support in this from the local education authority through involvement in the school improvement project. This is successfully raising awareness of the need for everyone to be sharper in checking how well pupils are doing, the effectiveness of teaching, and the weaknesses that are holding school improvement back. There is a new system for recording pupils' attainments so that the school knows what pupils can do and what they find hard. It is a good start, but it does not yet give senior managers a clear or quick enough overview in identifying inconsistencies in achievements. The introduction of target setting has resulted from examination of these records, performance data and feedback from lessons observations by the head teacher and local authority advisors. Staff training needs are clearly identified and addressed in subjects like mathematics so that staff gain confidence in their work. These important initiatives are not yet having enough impact on standards because they need time to be more firmly embedded in practice.
33. Governors are very supportive of the school and are aware of the major challenges facing the school and what needs to be done. They have a suitable committee structure in place and receive good information from the head teacher on which to base their plans. Although governors understand what needs to be done, like the need to raise standards in numeracy as an important target, they are less sure how to go about it. Some governors, through their links with subject leaders, seek to deepen their knowledge and appreciation of the school's work by observing lessons. Too often, though, governors accept the information they are given and do not do enough to check and evaluate it. They rely too heavily on the head teacher for information and guidance, and their support as critical friends is underdeveloped.
34. The systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning are currently being developed in line with the targets in the school development plan. Recent lesson observations and evaluations made through involvement in the local authority's school improvement project have highlighted clearly the strengths in teaching and shown where weaknesses lie. Teachers' use of questions is one area that has improved as a result of this process. However, apart from the head teacher, the subject leaders and those with management responsibilities are not as fully involved in this process as they might be. This was a weakness identified in the last inspection which has not yet been successfully dealt with. Some leaders, such as those for literacy and numeracy, have very good potential, not least in sharing their considerable expertise with others and raising their expectations of what can be done. However, they do not have enough opportunities to observe lessons, or to examine pupils' work and performance data so they do not have a clear enough overview of their subject or role in bringing about improvements. This aspect of school development planning needs to be addressed urgently because there are distinct differences in the quality of teaching in the school that have a significant impact on pupils' achievements. More could be done to share the successful features of teaching,

like those found in Years 5 and 6, and to deal with the features that lessen children's enthusiasm and act as a brake on their progress in the youngest classes.

35. The school's financial planning and management systems are satisfactory. Priorities in the school development plan are carefully costed and funds allocated wisely. Facilities for children in the Nursery and Reception classes are one area where careful spending on equipment and improvements to the outdoor area has improved resources for this aspect. However, more improvements are still needed. The school carries forward a high amount of unspent funds in spite of some fairly small single age classes in Years 4 to 6. This has largely been set aside to support future temporary teaching costs. More could be done to allocate these funds to areas the school identifies as development priorities, like improved facilities and equipment for outdoor play for the youngest children, and additional teaching support in the class of Year 1 and 2 pupils.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	391,472
Total expenditure	395,725
Expenditure per pupil	2,520

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	49,931
Balance carried forward to the next	45,678

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

36. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The children are taught in two classes. The Nursery class is taught by two nursery assistants and the Reception class by a qualified teacher and a nursery assistant. Most children achieve well enough by the time they leave the Reception class given their attainment on entry to the Nursery. Even so, at the end of the Reception Year, few children reach the goals they are expected to reach in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Their satisfactory standards in physical and creative development match their attainment on entry and their personal, social and emotional development is good.
37. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and good for personal, social and emotional development. However, teaching has insufficient regard to what children already know, understand and can do. This is because planning tends to focus on activities that will enable children to reach the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception class, with insufficient regard paid to the early stages of learning that children need to move through first. In the Reception class, there is little intervention in children's play and so learning is, too often, incidental.
38. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are unsatisfactory and good provision has not been maintained from the last inspection. This is because the Foundation Stage leader's role is concerned mainly with managing the budget for the Reception and Nursery classes. She is not given time to observe lessons or analyse assessment data and because of this lacks a clear view of what is and is not working and does not have a clear plan of improvement.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes enjoy school and become happy and secure learners by the time they start in Year 1.
- Good encouragement for children in both classes to conform to classroom routines means that children learn to behave very well.
- The Nursery class gives children a good start because children are supported effectively in their work and play.
- In the Reception class, children have too little guidance in which activities would be most beneficial to them and too little support when working independently.

Commentary

39. In this area of learning, most children reach the goals they are expected to reach by the end of the Reception class and make good progress. By the time they start in Year 1, most children maintain concentration and are interested in their work. They understand

right from wrong and have established good relationships with their classmates and because of this, work together well and show respect for others. In both classes, children develop a good grasp of how they are expected to behave in school and this sets the pattern for their future years. Adults make clear the routines and procedures and demand children stick to them. Most children dress and undress independently when getting ready for physical education sessions.

40. This is mainly because of effective teaching in this area of learning in the Nursery, which is built on satisfactorily in the Reception class. Good relationships, evident in both classes, result in children enjoying their work and play, although in the Reception class they are too often left to devise and extend their play with little adult support. Individuals are not encouraged to choose activities that will be of particular use to them in developing skills they do not already have. This means that learning is too often incidental and slower than it could be. For example, in one session, four children spent half an hour colouring in pictures, with no check made on their progress. Another small group played in the sand competently building tall and short towers. But, again, no one checked on how well they were doing, looked at how successful they were, or asked questions to extend their learning further. Their role-play is usually unattended and learning is limited because of this.
41. In contrast, in the Nursery class, adults constantly join children in their work and play, guiding them well, asking questions to extend their learning, and offering suggestions to make their play more effective. They encourage children to try new things and offer suggestions so that children persist with activities, such as construction, computer work, and role-play. For example, the children had baked and decorated gingerbread men. These same children later, with encouragement from a nursery assistant, replicated their real baking activity when they created play-dough gingerbread men in the creative area, put them in the role-play area oven to 'bake', and pressed the timer pad to alert them when they were ready to be 'eaten'. This activity included a range of learning opportunities across a number of areas of learning, such as mathematical, physical and creative development, and knowledge and understanding of the world and, because the adults focused on children's learning it was good.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children enjoy stories and develop a good love of books because of teachers' good story-telling techniques. Children use picture clues well to get the general gist of what the story is about and have a go at 'reading' the words.
- Although progress is satisfactory overall, insufficient regard is given in the Reception class in particular to how young children learn to read, write and speak and there are too few opportunities and too little encouragement for children to practise independent writing.

Commentary

42. Standards in this area of learning are below those expected by the end of the Reception class, but achievement is satisfactory given children's attainment on entry. Teaching is satisfactory.

43. Children in both classes develop a good love of books. This is because of the good model set by the teacher and nursery assistants. Their good facial expressions and excited voices hold children's attention well and tension, built up as the pages are turned, makes children want to find out what happens next. Children choose to read books on their own, or with a friend, often imitating the teacher reading to the class. In the Reception class, in particular, they join in with familiar phrases and rhymes and through this know that print carries meaning and that it is read from left to right. When reading on their own, these children use the picture clues to help them guess what the words say and, by the time they start in Year 1, most can hear and say initial and final sounds in words.
44. However, because these skills are taught in isolation, not all children make the link between what they learn about letter sounds and letter formation to help them to read and write unknown words. There are too few opportunities for children to write independently, such as in role-play, although some can write recognisable letters. In both classes, children have opportunities to talk to each other, but their vocabulary is limited and their speech often unintelligible. Sometimes children are asked to read and write before they have the skills to do so and insufficient regard is given to the early stages they need to move through in order to reach the goals. This is because of fundamental weaknesses in the use of assessment to tailor work for individual children.
45. Speaking skills are promoted well enough in the Nursery class because adults value and encourage talk throughout the day. They model speaking and listening when intervening in children's play and encourage children to use words to communicate. However, there are some missed opportunities in the Reception class, mainly because the adults work mostly with small groups at a time, whilst the rest of the class work independently, which limits the influence the adults have on children's speaking skills.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have a sound awareness of numbers as labels and for counting, but their calculation skills are weak.
- Shape, space and measures are taught well, but at the expense of the other two strands of mathematics.

Commentary

46. Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory and achievement is sound. Most children in both classes join in number songs and rhymes with good enthusiasm. In the Nursery, they are given good opportunities to use numbers in their play and, because adults intervene in their work, they often count objects and match numbers to pictures with adult help. For example, they match numerals to sets of objects, and use the egg timer in the computer area to measure time and make sure that they do not spend so long there that others do not get a chance. In the Reception class, most children complete number jigsaws accurately and already show a developing understanding of number values.

47. Most children have a secure understanding of numbers and a good awareness of space, shape and measures. However, there is little evidence in children's workbooks or around the classroom of children practising calculation skills. Not as many children as expected nationally reach the goals they are expected to by the end of the Reception class because their calculation skills are weak. Whilst some good opportunities are used to develop children's counting skills, such as during registration time in the Reception class, the focus this week has been on shape, space and measures. However, the assessment information that came from the Nursery class shows that children are quite good at this aspect of mathematics, demonstrating insufficient use of this information to inform planning. In addition, numbers are displayed in the classroom but these are too high up or put in obscure places, such as under equipment, limiting their usefulness.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's computer skills are taught well.
- There are insufficient things around the classrooms for children to look at and explore what is happening and how things work.

Commentary

48. Achievement is satisfactory overall; it is good in computer skills, but children do not reach the goals they are expected to reach at the end of the Reception Year, despite sound teaching in this area of learning. Computer skills are taught well, especially by the ICT technician who, during one session, for example, patiently guided children to produce pictures and type in their names.
49. Whilst some exploration work goes on, such as when walking in the neighbourhood, or on visits to the local farm, the majority of learning opportunities in this area of learning centre around computer work and investigating and using construction materials and equipment. The one lesson seen in the Reception class was very adult-directed and did not involve much exploration or investigation because children had limited time to talk about what they noticed and why it happened.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are numerous opportunities in both classes for children to develop their physical skills.
- Children in the Reception class have a good awareness of space and join in action rhymes with enthusiasm and confidence.

Commentary

50. Children start school with broadly average attainment in physical skills. They achieve satisfactorily and, because of sound teaching, most reach the goals they are expected to

reach by the end of the Reception Year. Reception class children are already showing a good awareness of space and can move around the hall in different ways without bumping into others. Because the class teacher and nursery assistants join in, they model how children are to move and this helps. Most children in both classes use a range of equipment safely and with developing control, such as in the Nursery class when they first stab at the paper with the paintbrush and then go on to learn how to stroke the paper to create a better effect. In the Reception class, they manipulate small construction equipment well to make models, and roll out long and short snakes in the play-dough area as well as cut out cakes and different shapes. Teaching makes good use of the outdoor learning area to give children the opportunity to run, jump and learn to manoeuvre wheeled toys.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are some good opportunities in the Nursery class for children to use their imagination in play.
- With adult support, children in the Reception class produce paintings of themselves with good proportion and recognisable features, but too much adult direction stifles creativity.

Commentary

51. Children achieve satisfactorily in this area of learning to reach the goals they are expected to by the end of the Reception Year. The teaching is satisfactory. Children in both classes have opportunity to explore shape and textures and use their imagination in dance. They sing a range of songs from memory and match movements to music satisfactorily. However, sometimes the work in the Reception class is over-directed, limiting children's' creativity. In one session seen, for example, the teacher and the nursery assistant each supervised a group of two or three children painting. The children painted very carefully, handling brushes and paint sensibly. They chose appropriate colours, but the activity was very directed. There was a picture on display for children to copy if they wished to, so all but a few 'free spirits' produced a similar picture to the one on display, limiting their imagination and lessening what they achieved.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The basic skills of reading and writing are taught well in Years 3 and 4 and very well in Years 5 and 6.
- Skills in reading and writing are taught through, and used well in, other subjects, but poor speaking and handwriting skills limit the standards pupils reach.
- Good subject leadership and management have improved provision and raised standards, and ensure that all pupils achieve well in English by the time they leave the school.
- Assessment systems have improved significantly and the information is used well in Years 3 to 6 to tailor work to pupils' needs, but it is used less well in Years 1 and 2.

Commentary

52. There has been good improvement since the last inspection to both standards and teaching in Years 3 to 6. As a result, standards in English are average by the end of Year 6 and pupils achieve well from Years 3 to 6. By the end of Year 2, standards are below average and achievement overall is satisfactory.
53. Reading is taught satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2 and well in Years 3 to 6. Reading resources have recently been increased and improved. For example, there is now a much wider variety of guided reading books that appeal to all pupils and these are used well by teachers to improve pupils' reading skills. 'Family learning' sessions support parents by helping them to help to improve their children's reading. Younger pupils benefit from a very structured approach to the teaching of reading where the early skills are satisfactorily taught. Well-trained teaching assistants give good support in reading to all pupils but especially those who have special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Particularly good support is given by the learning mentor to the many pupils identified as having barriers to learning. Teachers know their pupils well and set challenging targets, especially in Years 5 and 6, where pupils are encouraged to read and understand a wide variety of stimulating texts that are appropriate to their ability levels. The work of a wide variety of children's authors is shared and discussed.
54. The teaching of writing is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. The quality of teaching throughout the school has steadily improved because of initiatives the school has taken to raise standards in writing. Although test results fell in 2004, standards have risen over time, particularly in Years 3 to 6 where pupils' achievement is good. Writing skills are developed and consolidated effectively through other subjects. In Years 5 and 6 particularly, there is very good use of ICT, as well as a good range of cross-curricular links to support the planning, execution and presentation of written work. Throughout the school, teachers plan work to take account of the pupils' abilities though this is not always as effective as it could be in Years 1 and 2 because assessment is not used well enough to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged. Except in Years 5 and 6 where the standards of presentation are high because of the demands teachers make on pupils and pride pupils take in their work, the teaching of handwriting is a weakness, which the school is addressing.

55. Because of their very good behaviour and attitudes, pupils usually listen well to their teachers and one another. However, their speaking skills are below average in Years 3 to 6 and well below average in Years 1 and 2. This often slows the pace of lessons where pupils frequently struggle to interpret what is being said to them and to express their thoughts while the teacher and the class wait patiently for the answer. Teachers, in Years 3 to 6 in particular, make effective use of partner work, role-play, and drama to develop pupils' skills in speaking and listening. However, there is a need for a much greater emphasis on this aspect of English to be taught systematically across the school in order to raise standards, not just in literacy but also in other subjects.
56. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject leader has a very high level of personal expertise, which she uses to inspire and support her colleagues. She has improved the skills of teachers through carefully planned training and support over several years and this has helped to raise standards. However, she does not have sufficient time or opportunity to spread the very good practice in Years 5 and 6 to the rest of the school and to ensure assessment is used more effectively to meet the needs of different attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Literacy skills are used well across the curriculum, but pupils' poor competency in language has a detrimental effect on standards in other subjects. Pupils have good opportunity to write extensively in other subjects, especially in history, geography and religious education. Science and design and technology lessons also provide a good context for writing, and are frequently used for writing plans, instructions and results of experiments and evaluations. ICT is used very well to support literacy teaching and learning. Displays of pupils' written work are enhanced through the use of skilled word processing and their research skills are developed by the use of the Internet. However, pupils' poor speaking skills make it difficult for them to talk about their work with precision and explain clearly what they are doing and why.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 6 have improved since the last inspection but there has been a decline in standards in Year 2, where assessment information is not used well enough.
- Pupils' learning is accelerated in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is very good.
- Pupils enjoy their work and behave very well because they enjoy the challenge of practical and mental activities.
- A good action plan for mathematics, established recently, means that the school is clear about what it needs to do to improve, but new developments are taking time to impact on standards.
- Pupils' achievements are satisfactory but not yet as good as they could be because the subject leader is not sufficiently involved in finding out what works well and not so well in teaching and learning, hence ensuring that weaknesses are eliminated and the best practice is adopted by all.

Commentary

58. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are below average. However, whilst the results of tests in Year 6 have improved more quickly than the national trend overall in recent years, the results in Year 2 have not kept pace with national improvements and have shown a further fall in recent years. There is clear evidence of underachievement that has been identified by the school. However, a determined approach is now being made to rectify it, with support from the local education authority consultants. Observations of lessons and pupils' work show that pupils' achievements are now satisfactory overall, though more securely so in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. In spite of teachers' effective use of questions that prompt pupils to explain their calculations, pupils often find it hard to explain what they clearly know because their speech and language skills are relatively weak. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because activities are carefully planned and adults support them well in meeting their targets.
59. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers throughout the school forge very good relationships with pupils and are sensitive to their needs. Good use of praise and encouragement gives a much-needed boost to their confidence. There is a firm emphasis on basic skills so that pupils strengthen their sometimes shaky skills through further practice and repetition. Pupils make the best progress and their achievements accelerate in Years 5 and 6 where some good and very good teaching is more challenging and thorough. These teachers make sure that pupils know what they are to learn, making lesson objectives clear and focusing activities well so that pupils can achieve them. Pupils find it hard to recall multiplication facts because they have not memorised their multiplication tables, which slows their progress in mental calculations. However, these skills are improving fast in these two classes because teachers set exciting challenges in mental work at the start and end of lessons so that pupils work very hard to be first with the correct answer. They enjoy it so much they are sometimes reluctant to stop for break time. Teachers make good use of homework tasks to boost such skills. They mark pupils' work effectively so they know what they need to do to improve. Whilst teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall, it lacks this challenge and excitement. Too heavy reliance on the use of published workbooks and insufficient use of information about what pupils can already do mean that pupils of different abilities often do the same unchallenging work. This slows their achievements considerably, and more able pupils, in particular, in this class do not do well as well as they might.
60. In the past few years very few pupils in Year 2 reached higher than the expected level in tests in mathematics. Improvements in the leadership and management of the subject are rectifying this, however. The decision to place the most able Year 2 pupils in the Year 3 class this year is already seeing a marked improvement in their achievements because they work at a much faster pace and higher level than pupils in the Year 1/2 class.
61. The school has a good plan for improvement that highlights the important priorities for development. All the staff and governors know what needs to be done and are determined to raise standards further. They receive good support from the local education authority in checking the quality of teaching and learning. Involvement in the school improvement project means that targets and action are clearly identified and regularly reviewed. Mathematics has a high profile in the school, and most classrooms have numeracy displays that successfully stimulate pupils' interest in the subject. One area of success is the greater emphasis than before on practical, investigative activities and mental skills, that is effectively raising pupils' interest levels and boosting their skills well. A new system

for checking on pupils' achievements and progress now securely underpins this process, and is a useful tool in highlighting underachievement and inconsistencies in pupils' progress.

62. Leadership and management are satisfactory because the subject leader is new to post and initiatives have yet to impact. Working in Year 6, she provides an inspirational model for others in her own very good teaching. However, she does not have a good enough overview of standards, teaching and learning in the subject because her role is underdeveloped. Her checks on teaching and learning are not regular or thorough enough, and because of this weaknesses go on too long and all staff do not adopt the best practices fast enough. Whilst there have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection, many have been recent and not yet having enough impact on standards.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. This is unsatisfactory, although there are some valuable opportunities for pupils to further their mathematics skills in subjects like science and geography. Pupils sometimes make good use of their data-handling skills to produce pie charts and block graphs to record such investigations as the types of transport people use. However, the school does not have clear planning to guide teachers to possible opportunities when planning lessons. Pupils would benefit from more opportunities that challenge them to use and independently apply their growing mathematical skills to work in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective leadership has raised the profile of science and gives a good steer to improvement, especially in investigation work, but the systems for checking on standards and teaching are in their infancy.
- The quality of teaching is good in Years 5 and 6, but because of past weaknesses, there is too much catching up needed and standards are below average.
- In Years 1 and 2, there is insufficient use of assessment information to tailor the work for the most able pupils but, because the very most able Year 2 pupils are now taught in the Year 3 class, the percentage of pupils attaining above average is set to increase.
- Good use of subject language by teachers sets a good role model, but pupils still struggle to use scientific vocabulary themselves.
- In Years 1 to 4 marking serves little purpose, whereas in Year 5 and 6, it brings about good improvements.
- There is too much recording of science work in Years 1 and 2, limiting pupils' hands-on experience of practical investigations.
- Computers are used well to support work in science.

Commentary

64. There has been satisfactory improvement in science since the last inspection. Although standards are below average at the age of seven and eleven, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and teaching and learning are sound.
65. Subject leadership is good. The new subject leader's infectious enthusiasm for science has increased colleagues' interest in the subject and lifted its profile in the school's curriculum. She has not yet had the opportunity to observe lessons and track pupils' progress over time to reveal inconsistencies in teaching, learning and progress, and find out where the strengths and weaknesses lie. However, her time has been very usefully spent checking, renewing, and enhancing learning resources. She has also analysed test results, revealing a weakness in the teaching of investigative science, which she is successfully dealing with, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Here, the learning is exciting, such as when pupils in Year 4 observed mini-beasts using magnifying glasses, drew them carefully and in much detail, and found information about their life habits from books and the Internet. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils dissected flower heads and arranged them on paper to show a cross-sectional diagram, which they then labelled accurately. All pupils enjoyed the work immensely and took pride in the finished product. Computers are used increasingly well to support work in science, such as recording data on spreadsheets and researching information on the Internet.
66. The increased emphasis on investigative science work and less concentration on learning facts with little purpose is most evident in Years 3 to 6. Year 5 and 6 pupils have a good understanding of how to plan a test and carry it out. They are excited about science and see themselves as 'scientists' such is the enthusiasm instilled in them. However, this style of teaching is new and because of this, standards are still below what they should be by this time in Year 6. Pupils' learning is shaky because of too much past emphasis on teaching scientific knowledge at the expense of skills. In Years 1 and 2, there are still

signs of over-direction from the teaching and an over-emphasis on recording results which adds little to pupils' learning and weakens the quality of provision. For example, pupils spent an exciting 30 minutes talking about healthy eating and arranging food stuffs into groups according to different criteria. They then spent the rest of the lesson drawing a healthy meal, having been given so much help that they did not have to exert themselves too much or put much thought into their work.

67. In Years 1 to 4, teachers' marking does little to help pupils to improve. It is mostly ticks and, when comments are written by the teachers, they serve little purpose. When they do give helpful guidance, such as in Year 3 when the teacher wrote, "Try to make your diet varied", they bring no response from the pupils because no opportunity is given for them to have another go. In contrast, in Years 5 and 6, comments from the teachers are followed up by the pupils and work improves as a result. For example, in Year 5 the teacher wrote, "What about the balloon?" The pupil responded with, "The balloon blew up a tiny bit" and the teacher acknowledged this effort by writing underneath the pupils' response, "Better". This not only encourages pupils to think again, but values their efforts when they do.
68. Throughout the school, teachers use scientific words in their explanations and encourage pupils to use these terms when talking about what they are doing or responding to questions. This is done sensitively and in such a way that the pupils are not belittled or made to feel that their answers are inadequate. For example, when a Year 6 pupil explained that a plant needs roots "cos it would fall over", the teachers responded, "Yes, that's right, the roots *anchor* the plant". Nevertheless, even with this good role-model, pupils still often find it hard to find the best words to describe with precision what they mean, and struggle to explain their thoughts. For example, one Year 5 pupil predicted, when she was about to add bicarbonate of soda to lemonade, that it would "block the fizz". Whilst teachers in Years 5 and 6 do much to develop pupils' speaking skills, those in other years do not give pupils enough time to listen to and interpret what they hear, and to think of and formulate responses.
69. For several years, no pupils have reached above the expected level at the end of Year 2. This is because teaching takes insufficient regard of what pupils are capable of doing and the work of the most able Year 2 pupils is insufficiently challenging. In response to this and to bring about an immediate remedy to this situation, this year the senior managers put the most able Year 2 pupils into the Year 3 class, where, taught by the science co-ordinator, they are doing work that is more in line with their capabilities. They are coping well with the higher level work and are on course to reach above the expected level at the end of this year. Meanwhile, the subject leader and senior managers are pursuing and working to eradicate the weakness in Years 1 and 2.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection mainly because of more effective teaching and improved resources.
- Detailed subject guidelines support good teaching so that all pupils make good progress.

- A great deal of training has raised the skills and confidence of teachers and because of this teaching is now good in Years 3 to 6.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

70. Since the most recent inspection, standards, pupils' achievement and the ICT curriculum have greatly improved. Standards in ICT are now in line with national expectations by the end of Years 2 and 6, and the school meets statutory requirements fully. Though not all pupils have access to a computer at home, all make good progress and achieve well because of very well structured subject teaching guidelines, much better teaching, and increased resources. Throughout the school, the subject has a high profile and presentations of pupils' work in other subjects are often enhanced by the use of ICT because the subject is used effectively to support learning across the curriculum.
71. Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6, but no judgement could be made about the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 because no lessons were seen. The school now makes very good use of portable laptops that enable large groups of pupils to be taught together. In addition the school uses the services of a specialist teacher who has a very high level of expertise. He uses a wide variety of software and the Internet to interest and challenge pupils. This, coupled with a great deal of training, means that teachers are now much more confident at teaching ICT. They use well-structured subject guidelines to ensure there is a good development of skills as pupils move through the school. Year 1 and 2 pupils, for example, use a word-search program to support their work in literacy and pupils in Years 3 to 6 use ICT to present information in mathematics and science. They use spreadsheets to manipulate data they have gathered, and confidently use software to control 'traffic lights' and develop skills in control technology. The Internet is used to support personal research work in history and geography. Across the school, pupils use word processing and hardware such as digital cameras to produce attractive high quality work in all subjects of the curriculum.
72. The subject leader provides good leadership. She has provided many opportunities for staff training. The structured subject guidance is very effective and is beginning to be used to enable the progress of the pupils to be effectively monitored. Both hardware and software have greatly improved. The school does not have a computer suite, but very effective timetabling and the fact that the pupils are so good at working independently enable large groups of pupils to work together using the portable laptops. The subject leader is also developing very useful links with local high schools to provide opportunities for pupils to benefit from more specialist teaching.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their work in other subjects, enabling pupils to see the relevance of computers in the context of learning, and to appreciate their capacity as tools for learning.

HUMANITIES

74. Religious education was not inspected. This is because this is a Roman Catholic school, providing denominational religious education which is inspected by another inspection team.

75. It was not possible to reach secure judgements about overall standards and teaching in **history** and **geography** as no lessons were seen in these subjects. However, from an analysis of pupils' work, there is satisfactory coverage of both subjects. A strong feature of teaching is the good links that are made with other subjects. For example, pupils use the paintings of Lowry and photographs of modern Oldham, taken with a digital camera, to appreciate how and why the urban landscape has evolved. Year 5 pupils make good use of the local education authority's outdoor centre to undertake work on rivers and understand features of upland moorland. The pupils' skills in ICT are used well to present these. There were very good links with literacy in geography when Year 5 pupils used good mapping skills to plot the family's journey in the story *Kensuke's Kingdom* by Michael Morpurgo across the oceans. In Year 4, a Roman fort was visited and pupils compared the Roman transport with that of today. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 used the local area to develop an understanding of the local environment and decide what they could do to improve it. Older pupils make good use of the Internet to undertake research in both history and geography. The subject leader ensures that skills are developed systematically through a well-structured curriculum.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

76. Only one lesson was seen in design and technology and none in art and design, music and physical education. The evidence from teachers' planning and pupils' work on display and in their workbooks indicates that coverage in all these subjects is in line with the school's planning arrangements, but it is insufficient to enable overall judgements to be made about provision, teaching and standards.

77. In **art and design** pupils' observational skills develop well. Particularly good examples of art work are evident in Year 6 where pupils' interpretations of the work of artists like Cezanne and Lowry show a good attention to detail in depicting features like body movements. Such themes as 'forgive and forget' show the impact of very good development of spiritual, moral and social awareness in the facial expressions that pupils carefully portray. Powerful use of computers means that pupils use their graphical modelling skills to good effect in creating their own work in the style of the Spanish artist, Miro.

78. In **design and technology** pupils achieved well in Year 6 when they designed and created attractive theatrical masks finished to a high standard. In other classes pupils' progress is sometimes slower when teachers over-direct their projects so that pupils do not develop their own planning skills, independence and creativity enough in designing and making their own projects.

79. In **music** pupils develop good singing skills. This is particularly evident in assemblies and hymn practices where their tuneful, expressive singing can be very moving. In **physical education** boys and girls benefit from expert coaching in football, hockey and judo, and have competed with some success with other schools in sports like football and netball.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in pupils' personal, social, health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal, social and health education and citizenship are very well planned for and taught regularly and effectively in all classes.
- Very good cross-curricular links ensure that there are many incidental opportunities for reinforcing pupils' learning.
- Teaching is good across the school.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

80. The school places strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal, social, and health education and their awareness and understanding of citizenship. Very well organised and structured teaching guidelines ensure that there is a very good emphasis on pupils' personal development. This is promoted very successfully through work in many subjects, as well as in regular timetabled lessons when pupils explore and talk about pertinent personal, national and world-wide issues, such as racism and the effects of pollution and crime. For example, Year 6 pupils know why we have rules and how the media can present things in a biased way.
81. Very good relationships between adults and pupils enable difficult and sensitive issues to be openly discussed. As well as regular timetabled lessons, the school provides many opportunities for furthering pupils' learning in this area of the curriculum. For example, pupils extend their understanding of a healthy lifestyle through work in science and physical education. The school has also participated in the Healthy Schools Award and has examined environmental issues such as recycling waste and encouraging pupils to walk to school.
82. Throughout the school, teaching is good and it is very good in Years 5 and 6. The lessons seen in these classes used very good links with English to develop pupils' insight into an understanding of how others feel when they are excluded and made to feel different. In conversations with pupils, they show a good understanding of the qualities of citizenship. Year 6 pupils are well aware, for example, of issues about racism. They understand how what they do in school can help them in their chosen career. For example, one pupil explained how learning about healthy living now will help her later to become a paramedic. They understand the need to save money and the usefulness of having some 'put away' for when they want to buy a car, or put a deposit down on a house.
83. The subject leader, who is very enthusiastic and well organised, has a strong influence on the development of the subject throughout the school. She provides good leadership and manages the subject well.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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