

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARIE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bury

LEA area: Bury

Unique reference number: 105335

Headteacher: Mrs F Robinson

Lead inspector: Ms S Billington

Dates of inspection: 20th - 22nd June 2005

Inspection number: 267858

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:	205
School address:	Edward Street The Mosses Bury Lancashire
Postcode:	BL9 0RZ
Telephone number:	(0161) 764 3204
Fax number:	(0161) 764 4257
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Hyndman
Date of previous inspection:	7 th June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an average-sized primary school with seven classes – one for each year group – and a Nursery for three to four year-olds. The majority of pupils come from the local area, which is socially disadvantaged.

The majority of pupils are of White British heritage but a significant proportion – around a third – is of Asian Pakistani origin. Most pupils speak English fluently; a few are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Around a third of the pupils are from non-Catholic families.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average and seven pupils have statements of special need – these are mostly at the top end of the school as special provision for pupils with significant learning difficulties is gradually being phased out by the LEA (local education authority).

The number of pupils that enter or leave the school each year is slightly higher than average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
4343	Shirley Billington	Lead inspector	English Art and design Design and technology English as an additional language
11096	Margaret Davie	Lay inspector	
4341	David Clegg	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography Physical education Special educational needs
16971	Roger Hardaker	Team inspector	Science History Music Foundation Stage

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **good** school. Teaching is good and pupils achieve well. The school is well led and managed and benefits from the work of a committed team of staff and governors. Parents and carers are confident about the work of the school and pupils enjoy their lessons. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get a good start to learning.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 achieve well; standards in English, mathematics and science are rising but limited speaking skills restrict achievement for some pupils.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by key staff and governors.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning, behave very well and benefit from the very good provision for their personal development.
- Links with parents are very good and they get good information to help them to help their children.
- There are some weaknesses in the records maintained on pupils with special educational needs that make tracking their progress difficult.

Following the last inspection, standards declined but are now improving again. Strengths have been maintained. Teaching remains good and the school continues to be well led and managed.

The weaknesses found in the last inspection were successfully tackled when a new headteacher took up post. A homework policy is in place and attendance levels have improved to broadly average levels. Good use is now made of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Planning in the Nursery and Reception classes has improved. Speaking skills for pupils in Years 3 to 6 remain weak.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 , compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	D	D	E	E
mathematics	B	E	D	D
science	D	B	E	E

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

Pupils achieve **well** overall. Results in national tests do not reflect this because of the high proportion of pupils with significant learning difficulties in Year 6. Almost all pupils without learning difficulties attain at least average levels in the tests.

In English, pupils have generally done better in reading than in writing and this is a particularly weak area for boys. Work currently going on to improve pupils' written work is making a difference and standards are rising, but limitations in pupils' vocabulary affect the quality of their work at times. Standards are also improving in mathematics and science. Pupils in Year 2 are now attaining broadly average levels and this represents very good progress. While children get a good

foundation for later learning in Nursery and Reception classes, their literacy and numeracy skills are still generally well below average at the start of Year 1.

Pupils with special educational needs achieve well overall but it is sometimes difficult to track their short-term progress because the targets set for them are not always sharp enough and records are not always up to date.

Pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language make good progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers.

Pupils' personal development is **very good** and particularly strong in the spiritual, social and moral aspects.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are good. Recent training on the teaching of literacy and numeracy, together with regular checks on the quality of lessons and pupils' work, have resulted in improved standards.

The curriculum is well planned to cover all the subjects that it should. Links with parents are very good and these have a positive impact on children's learning. Good links with the community, particularly the local church, and with other schools enrich opportunities for learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction and has been instrumental in driving up standards. The deputy head and key subject co-ordinators support her well. They are good at recognising what needs to be improved and taking effective action. Governance is good; governors have a good knowledge of the school and play their part in forward planning. Some statutory responsibilities are not met, the most important being that some staff have not been trained in child protection procedures.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the work of the school and the way that their children are helped to learn. Pupils are also positive; they are confident that their views are listened to and particularly positive that the range of clubs has been extended in response to their requests for more variation in the activities offered.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Extend pupils' vocabulary and improve their skills in speaking.
- Ensure that records on pupils with special educational needs are rigorously maintained.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that child protection training is up to date and that all staff are trained in the necessary procedures.
- Include all the required information in the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils achieve well. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average at the end of Year 2. Although standards are below average at the end of Year 6, there good indications of improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Nursery and Reception class get a very good foundation for later learning.
- Standards in reading and writing are improving but there are weaknesses in pupils' speaking skills.
- Standards in mathematics and science are rising.

Commentary

Test results

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	16.5 (16.0)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.7 (14.3)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.0 (14.6)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 24 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 2 has improved over the past two years. In 2004, results were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and well above those of similar schools. Preliminary results for 2005 show that this trend has been maintained. Girls generally perform better than boys in national tests, although there is some variation in different year groups.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.5 (26.0)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	26.5 (24.8)	27.0 (26.8)
science	27.3 (29.6)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 24 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. Performance in national tests at the end of Year 6 is very erratic. This is largely because the high proportion of pupils with significant special educational needs¹ impacts on overall results and brings them down to below or well below national averages. When the results of these pupils are disregarded, the proportion of pupils who attained at least average levels in tests in 2004 is slightly above national averages. Few pupils attained above-average results in English but the proportion attaining higher levels in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. Results in 2005 are not yet available; however, the majority of pupils in this year

¹ The school has local education authority (LEA) resource provision for pupils with specific learning difficulties. This is currently being phased out, but a few pupils remain in current Year 5 and 6 classes.

group has learning difficulties and overall performance is again likely to be well below the national average. As with the younger pupils, girls have generally done better than boys but again with some variation in different years and subjects. Writing is generally a weaker area for boys.

Inspection findings

3. The inspection found that standards are rising in English, mathematics and science as a result of well-targeted initiatives to improve aspects of teaching and curriculum provision.
4. Children in the Nursery and Reception make good progress in all aspects of their learning as a result of a well-organised curriculum and good teaching. By the time they start Year 1, many are close to attaining expected levels in their personal and social development. Their listening skills are good but for many, speaking skills are still limited. Their skills in early literacy and numeracy are still well below average, with very few attaining levels normally expected by the end of the Reception Year. However, children have a good foundation for later learning and are well prepared to benefit from a more formal curriculum in Years 1 and 2.
5. In English, standards are rising rapidly in reading and writing. This is particularly evident at the lower end of the school where pupils in Year 2 have made very good gains; over a third have improved their reading ages by more than two years within two terms. Standards are also improving further up the school where pupils are generally making at least expected progress as a result of regular and focused reading sessions and opportunities to write for a range of purposes. However, limitations in vocabulary restrict pupils' abilities to understand sophisticated texts and they often find it difficult to extract specific information, for example, about a particular character in a story.
6. Good planning and well-structured numeracy lessons are improving achievement in mathematics. In science, there has been a recent focus on improving pupils' investigative skills and this is a key factor in the improving standards. In information and communication technology (ICT), pupils' skills are above average at the end of Year 2 and broadly average at the end of Year 6. No judgement was made on standards in other subjects.

Achievement of different groups

7. The inspection confirmed that boys achieve less well than girls in writing in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve well in basic skills in literacy and numeracy. However, it is not always possible to measure their short-term progress as targets on their individual education plans (IEPs) are not always sufficiently specific. Pupils speaking English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. Those in the early stages of learning English usually make good gains in their acquisition of the language.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

This is a strong feature of the school. Pupils behave very well and have good attitudes to learning. Provision for their personal development is very good, particularly their spiritual, moral and social development. Attendance is broadly average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very positive about school and keen to take part in all it offers.
- Younger pupils have very good attitudes to learning but some of the older pupils do not have good enough work habits.
- Behaviour is very good and pupils respond well to the good provision for their spiritual, moral and social development.
- Attendance has improved and registers are properly completed.

Commentary

8. Pupils are very happy and like their school. They feel their views are really valued and enjoy working with the pupil council to make their school better. They are enthusiastic about the clubs and activities available to them and are particularly pleased that they can take part in team sports such as football and netball against other schools.
9. Good attitudes to learning are evident throughout the school; younger pupils are particularly enthusiastic about learning and show very high levels of concentration. In the Nursery, for example, children listen to their teachers carefully and focus on their activities for a good length of time. These very good attitudes are particularly evident in Years 1 and 2 and impact significantly on how well pupils are learning. Most of the older pupils are also interested in learning, as was shown in Year 6 when they enthusiastically carried out experiments in a science lesson. However, a significant minority of these pupils cannot settle and get on with their tasks quickly and this impacts on their productivity and how well they learn.
10. Behaviour is very good; pupils are polite and considerate both to adults and each other. This is because the staff have very high expectations of them, are quick to praise achievements and provide really good role models for them to follow. Pupils get on well with each other and say there are few incidents of bullying, harassment or racism. Racial harmony is very good. A small number of pupils with behavioural difficulties get good additional support, and older pupils show a high degree of sensitivity toward children with severe needs. As a last resort, as a result of some aggressive behaviour, it was necessary to exclude three pupils for a short time in the last school year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed-period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	106	3	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	34	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0

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

11. A strong focus on prayer and spirituality impacts positively on pupils' development and gives them a strong foundation on which to develop their own personal values. Parents are fully supportive of the strong emphasis on this aspect of their children's development and none has withdrawn their child from worship or lessons in religious education. All pupils are reverent during prayer and there is a good awareness of the needs of children who do not follow the Roman Catholic faith.

12. Social and moral development is supported very well and this impacts significantly on the very good relationships and good ethos within the school. Pupils are encouraged to consider the needs of others and follow the school rules. They feel they are rewarded well at the weekly celebration assemblies and that sanctions are fair. Pupils' willingness to work together is demonstrated by their work on the school council and by the productive way they work together in lessons, for example, helping each other on the computers or setting up experiments in science lessons. They are starting to develop an awareness of the range of cultures represented within the school by, for example, celebrating Eid and Pakistani Heritage Day.
13. Attendance has improved since the time of the last inspection because of better monitoring and record keeping. Parents generally make good efforts to ensure their child attends regularly but a significant minority misses some time during term to go on a family holiday. A very small number of pupils regularly arrive late, making a poor start to the day, but good plans are in place to tackle this.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	0.0
National data	5.5	National data	0.0

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 overall quality of education is good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching, learning and assessment arrangements are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make good use of resources and an effective range of teaching techniques.
- Lessons are well planned and organised; occasionally time is not used as effectively as it might be.
- Teaching generally engages pupils' interest but some older pupils sometimes struggle to maintain concentration.
- Assessment is used well and marking is thorough and helpful.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 25 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	0	19	6	0	0	0

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

14. Resources are used well in most lessons to engage pupils' interest and to support teaching and learning. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, for example, the teacher used a 'big book' well to highlight some of the main features of information books and to encourage pupils to

understand the significance of captions and labels. In science lessons, resources enable pupils to have good first-hand experiences and to observe closely key characteristics of an area of study. Teachers make good use of techniques such as demonstration, explanation and questions to reinforce teaching points and to help pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding. Support staff are effective in helping specific groups or individual pupils; just occasionally in lessons where there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and no additional support, teachers are stretched in trying to meet the wide range of needs within the class.

15. Planning is detailed and helpful in guiding teaching and learning. The main aims of the lesson are usually shared with the pupils so that they have a view of what they are going to learn. Just occasionally introductions to lessons last too long or the pace of learning slows. As a result, pupils' usually good levels of application lapse or the time they have to complete their tasks is too limited.
16. Relationships are very positive and teachers place a strong emphasis on boosting pupils' self-esteem. Pupils are praised for their efforts and for attempting to answer a question even when the answer is inaccurate. Expectations of behaviour are clear and lessons are well managed. The vast majority of pupils apply themselves well but occasionally some pupils, mostly in Year 6, find it difficult to maintain concentration for more than a short period.
17. Teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their lessons and make adjustments to future planning and teaching to take account of pupils' needs. In a science lesson with Year 4, for example, the teacher checked on pupils' existing knowledge about habitats to help them to plan how they would collect a variety of invertebrates. Pupils' work is regularly marked and clear evaluative comments help pupils understand what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum that meets the needs of the great majority of pupils. It is enriched by a good range of extra activities. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are well-planned programmes for literacy and numeracy but in some lessons there is too little support for pupils with significant learning problems.
- There are a good number of activities that supplement learning in lessons.
- There is good provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE).
- Resources are generally good, although library provision is limited.

Commentary

18. The school has worked hard to put in place a well-planned curriculum. This ensures that as pupils move through the school what they learn builds up in a sensible manner. This is particularly the case in literacy and numeracy. Good use is made of the national guidance for planning and teaching and this helps to produce well-planned lessons that take account of the needs of pupils of different abilities. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes all the required subjects. Through the different subjects children are offered a good range of learning opportunities.
19. There are some good links being made between different subjects so that children apply skills learned in one subject to help with learning in another. This is evident in how much pupils' ICT and literacy skills are used in different subjects.
20. The work given to pupils with learning difficulties is generally matched to their needs. However, because there is a high proportion of pupils with significant difficulties in some classes there is the need for constant support to ensure that their needs are fully met. There

are some occasions when the support is not available and this makes teaching extremely demanding. On these occasions the needs of these pupils are not catered for as well as when support is present.

21. Regular clubs add to the range of activities, with a good variety of options including photography, cookery and sport. There is also a popular breakfast club. Visits to places of interest add to the curriculum and are used to make learning more meaningful when children return to school. These include visits to local amenities and further afield.
22. The school does much to help pupils to develop personally. Pupils have regular opportunities to talk about how they feel about personal issues. Learning in science makes a very good contribution to the provision for PSHE. When studying life processes pupils learn about growth and the importance of healthy eating through a balanced diet. Year 4 pupils cover a lot of work on the topic of 'my body'. They also study growth of plants and animals. Year 5 learn about healthy eating and what makes a balanced diet. Year 2 pupils learn that some medicinal drugs can have beneficial effects but that they need to be treated with caution. They are also taught how to care for their teeth.
23. There is a good level of resources, for instance, the school is very fortunate in having two halls and two ICT suites. However, the library for Years 3 to 6 is rather limited and the range of books is not wide or extensive.

Care, guidance and support

The steps taken to ensure pupils' welfare are satisfactory. The support pupils get as a result of checking their achievements is good and they are involved well in developing the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good attention is paid to the care of pupils but some staff have not yet been trained in child protection procedures.
- Targets help pupils know how to improve their learning but these are not as clear as they could be for pupils with learning difficulties.
- Pupils' views are highly valued.

Commentary

24. Pupils are well taken care of because of effective procedures to take make sure they are working in a safe environment. Regular checks are carried out on the premises, the site is very secure and the local fire safety officer has recently been in. Most staff have had some recent training to make sure they are up to date with child protection procedures, but not the midday supervisors, which is a weakness. Great care is taken when pupils need to be given medicines in school. Parents are always asked to sign a consent form with clear instructions, but the required records on the administration of medication are not kept.
25. The school is a friendly community with a strong Catholic ethos and pupils and their families are very well known. Teachers are astute at recognising when a pupil needs a bit of extra support at the start of the day to get going or needs attention because of feeling unwell, and are readily available to parents and carers to discuss any concerns. As a result, pupils like and trust their teachers and are confident they are getting all the help and guidance they need. Learning targets in mathematics and writing are helping them understand how they can improve and this is starting to impact on how well they are doing in these subjects.
26. There are some weaknesses in the records kept on pupils with special educational needs. Some are meticulously maintained but practice is inconsistent. Individual education plans (IEPs) usually have clear targets, although sometimes too many are set for individual pupils. Pupils' progress is not always recorded against the targets and, where it is, the outcomes sometimes do not inform the next IEP. Some IEPs are not dated or numbered, making

progress more difficult to track and it is not always clear when decisions are made to involve outside agencies in supporting individual pupils.

27. The school council effectively involves pupils in the development of the school. The deputy headteacher and pupils worked very well as a team to organise the council's constitution; elections were held on the day of the general election in order to help pupils to appreciate the importance of voting. Councillors are currently considering how play times can be made better by improving playground markings and getting a 'friendship bench'. Their views are highly valued and suggestions acted on.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnership with parents is very good and a significant strength of the school. Links with the community and other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are valued as partners in their child's education; however some of the information they get could be better.
- Links with the parish church are very strong and impact significantly on pupils' development.
- Good links with the community and other local schools enhance pupils' experiences.

Commentary

28. The school works very effectively with parents to support their child's learning. Parents have a lot of confidence in the staff and are particularly pleased about the easy access they have to them. Good relationships are established in the Nursery where parents are very warmly welcomed and encouraged to help settle their child. They are also invited to many school events such as assemblies, mass, plays and coffee mornings so they can get a full view of school life. A parent-teacher association, embracing all members of the school community, has recently been formed and is starting to make a good contribution to fundraising and supporting community links. The children of working parents are well looked after when they attend the breakfast or after-school clubs.
29. Weekly newsletters provide very good information about important dates and events. Teachers invite parents to find out about their child's curriculum and learning programmes such as 'Keeping up with the Children' help them keep up to date with current methods. An effective homework policy has been put in place since the last inspection. Year-end reports are satisfactory, but some could be clearer in the information they give about progress and how children can make improvements to their learning. The prospectus contains good information for new parents and is well presented, but missing some information. The name of the chair of governors is omitted and it gives an approximate attendance rate rather than the actual absence figures, as required. The governors' annual report is detailed and missing only a small detail: an address at which the chair of governors and clerk can be contacted. Every effort is made to provide information in community languages.
30. Very close links with the church contribute significantly to pupils' personal development. The parish priest visits regularly and gets to know pupils very well. Newsletters are regularly exchanged and keep the school and pupils at the heart of parish life. Pupils preparing for the sacraments benefit from strong support from the headteacher.
31. Effective community links enhance pupils' learning experiences and give them an opportunity to contribute to community life. For example, members of the Bury Football Club visited to talk to pupils about road safety and healthy lifestyles, and a local supermarket has displayed pupils' artwork. The choir performed for local elderly residents and also won a local singing competition. Constructive partnerships with other schools provide opportunities for staff training and additional support for specific groups of pupils such as those with a keen interest

in science. Most pupils transfer to the local Catholic high school in Year 7 and there is good support for both their academic and social needs which helps to make the transfer smooth.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Leadership by key staff is good. Management is good. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership.
- There are good systems for checking up on the school's effectiveness and taking action where necessary.
- Governors support the school well but some of their statutory responsibilities are not met.

Commentary

32. On taking up post, the headteacher rightly identified the need to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. In-service training, specific programmes to support pupils who were not making the progress that they should and improvements in resources have had a positive impact and standards are improving. Specific training for subject co-ordinators has also been effective in helping them to fulfil their roles; the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators are fully involved in improving provision for these key areas. Provision for Nursery and Reception children is managed well, with staff working effectively together. They set high expectations and work hard to provide a good start for children's learning and personal development.
33. Planning for school improvement is securely based on an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan has a strong focus on the need to continue to improve standards in literacy, with the emphasis now shifting from reading to writing. Science is now featuring as a priority with the recognition that pupils' skills in practical aspects of the subject need to be improved. The plan is clear and details the tasks to be undertaken to meet specific objectives and the key personnel involved. Regular checks are made on the impact of the initiatives put in place. Lesson observations, for example, have focused on specific aspects of the teaching of writing and the impact of the introduction of planning based on national guidance for teaching numeracy.
34. Pupils' progress is tracked through regular scrutiny of books and the use of standardised tests. The information from the tests is analysed to identify pupils who may need extra support and to ensure that pupils are on track to fulfil their potential. These checks are also used to identify whether teaching is meeting pupils' needs; where there are weaknesses, decisive action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching.
35. The governing body has recently reorganised its committee structure to enable it to meet new responsibilities and to work efficiently. Governors are well informed about the school and aware of its strengths and weaknesses; they know, for example, that reading standards have improved and that writing is a current priority. Governors played a significant role last year in planning to deal with a potentially deficit budget and were fully involved in dealing with some difficult issues, including staff redundancies. The governing body is involved in policy development and is currently reviewing the policy for sex and relationships education. Governors work hard to fulfil their responsibilities, but there are some statutory requirements that are not met (see paragraphs 25 and 27).

Financial information

Financial information for the Year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	542,461	Balance from previous year	9,909
Total expenditure	505,139	Balance carried forward to the next year	55,450
Expenditure per pupil	2,768		

36. In 2003-4 it was anticipated that the budget was to be drastically cut because of the loss of funding for pupils in resource provision and the loss of social factor funding. During this year, some additional funding has been obtained that has led to a substantial carry forward. This is earmarked to be used for further improvements to the building, including an upgrade of the junior library, and some additional support staff time.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

There has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection. There is a strong emphasis on language development because of the generally poor speaking skills children have on entry to Nursery. Teaching is good and the rate of children's progress has improved, particularly in literacy, mathematics, and knowledge and understanding of the world. However, because of limitations in their language, few are on course to attain expected levels in these areas at the start of Year 1.

Nursery children soon settle into school routines and are keen to learn. Good records are kept to track children's progress and to provide new challenges for them. Children with special educational needs are identified early and as a result of the effective support they receive their achievements mirror those of others.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children feel happy and secure and respond by behaving well.
- Well-structured opportunities develop children's social interaction and independence.

Commentary

37. Good teaching ensures that children make good progress and attain standards that are close to those expected by the start of Year 1. In the Nursery, children respond well to the stimulating, yet calm and ordered, environment. All adults are caring and supportive and this encourages children to try things out for themselves. Staff are good role models and forge good relationships with the children. There is good interaction between adults and children and this ensures that children engage readily in activities and learn to make choices, steadily building confidence over time.
38. By the end of Reception most children are able to share resources, take turns and make choices. They begin to play co-operatively, developing their ideas in role-play, for example, playing in the airport lounge or enjoying a 'flight' in the aeroplane. Adults encourage personal independence, for example, children are expected to tidy away after activities and learn to dress themselves after physical education lessons. Reception children do these things well. Most of the oldest children can sit quietly when appropriate, for example, when they are on the carpet listening to the teacher. Both Nursery and Reception children behave very well in response to the consistent expectations of staff.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of opportunities extends children's speaking skills well.
- A good programme for teaching letter sounds helps to develop early reading and writing skills.

Commentary

39. Children are given a good range of opportunities to speak and listen and discuss their ideas as they go about their activities. Staff make effective use of everyday situations to encourage them to talk and extend their language. They give time and opportunities for children to have conversations with each other. In small and large groups, staff prompt children's thinking and discussion. They often encourage children to extend their responses to a question. Children are encouraged to speak in a wide range of contexts. In the Reception class, one boy, with the skilful support of the teacher, spoke proudly to the other children about a very good drawing of a train he had completed using the computer. In leading a whole-school assembly, which included parents, Reception children in the Reception class built up their confidence in speaking to an audience.
40. A good programme for teaching children to recognise letters and their sounds makes a good contribution to developing early reading and writing skills. Children learn that some letter combinations have distinct sounds of their own. Using this knowledge, the higher attainers are learning to read simple words. Children make marks and are beginning to form letters, displaying increasing control of writing materials.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of practical activities helps children to grasp early mathematical ideas.

Commentary

41. Nursery children are given good opportunities to learn through well-planned practical tasks and they achieve well. For example, the youngest children count, sort and order objects. They play simple number games and they learn the sequence of numbers when singing number songs. There is an appropriate focus on the development of mathematical vocabulary. With adult support and prompting, most Nursery children say the numbers to ten in order, but a significant number do not yet recognise written numbers beyond five. Reception children continue to achieve well, for instance, about half of them know 'one more' than a given number between 1 and 9. However, by the end of Reception few children have developed secure number skills and knowledge to use in solving simple number problems. Most order objects according to their respective size and are developing a mathematical vocabulary, understanding, for example, the meaning of words such as 'bigger' and 'smaller'.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Provision in knowledge and understanding is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are encouraged to be inquisitive.
- A good range of interesting activities supports children's learning.

Commentary

42. Teachers plan a good range of activities to encourage children to explore and find out about the world around them. Nursery children watched in fascination as the teacher showed them how to build a wall using proper bricks and mortar. Older children show a growing awareness of the materials from which various objects are made, for example, as they check whether these will sink or float when placed in a tank of water. Before testing, they are encouraged to predict the results. Reception children collect minibeasts from the school grounds. With support, they draw simple graphs to denote the type and number of insects and bugs they find.
43. Both Nursery and Reception children use a computer confidently for a range of purposes. For example, Reception children use an art program to draw pictures of trains, cars and buses. These children have generally attained computing skills in line with the expected levels and in some cases exceed these.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT and CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Not enough direct teaching was seen to make a judgement on provision or standards in these two areas.

44. Brief observation of parts of two lessons and a look at teachers' planning suggests that children are given good opportunities for **physical development** through many activities both indoors and outside. The small outdoor play area restricts opportunities for adventurous and challenging play and access to this area is limited for the Reception class². While structured physical education lessons enable Reception children learn to move in and use a large space, a significant minority is not yet confident and sure of their skills. Good opportunities are provided in both Nursery and Reception for children to develop the finer skills needed to successfully use a paintbrush or pencil and to use scissors to cut out carefully.
45. A wide range of different experiences is planned and resources are good for **creative development**. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, children are encouraged to make things using a range of media. They create pictures, for example, drawing and painting observational pictures of plants and flowers. Reception children sang enthusiastically when leading assembly for the whole school. The quality of singing was good, with children generally maintaining good tone, pitch and rhythm.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading have improved rapidly.
- Strategies to improve pupils' skills in writing are having a good impact.
- Many pupils have limited vocabulary and find difficulty in expressing their ideas.

Commentary

46. As a result of the strong focus on improving standards, pupils are achieving well. Standards are rising. This is particularly evident at the lower end of the school where the majority of pupils in Years 1 and 2 are attaining broadly average and sometimes higher levels.

² The school has plans to improve this outdoor play area.

Improvement is also evident further up the school, but many pupils are still struggling with key skills and making up lost ground that has resulted in some past underachievement.

47. Over the past two years, a range of initiatives has been implemented to raise standards in reading. These included updating and widening the range of reading books; providing regular opportunities for pupils to read and to listen to good quality fiction in class; and encouraging pupils to take books home and to read regularly to parents or other family members. Pupils' skills in reading are tracked through regular testing and those who are not making the progress that they should are given extra support to help them to make up lost ground. As a result, most pupils in Year 2 are reading accurately and understand the main events in a story. They know some of the key features of a book, such as the title and author, and are aware of the differences between fiction and information books. Some of the older pupils name favourite authors, such as Jacqueline Wilson and Michael Morpurgo, but a significant number are still reluctant readers, struggling with some unfamiliar vocabulary and finding it difficult to get beyond the literal meaning of the text.
48. As with reading, written work is showing improvement that is much more apparent at the lower end of the school. Pupils in Year 2 have made good gains this year; average attainers, for example, have progressed from writing simple accounts to introducing descriptive vocabulary and using a variety of ways to start their stories. Higher attainers make good use of connectives and dialogue. For older pupils, in Years 5 and 6, the range of written work has improved and most pupils are aware of the key characteristics of factual writing, such as a persuasive argument or instructions. However, many make careless errors with spelling and grammar. Higher attainers adapt language to suit a variety of purposes and convey meaning clearly, often choosing words carefully and using a range of punctuation accurately.
49. Throughout the school, many pupils have limited speaking skills and this has an impact on their learning in other areas. While the vast majority of pupils listen attentively and show understanding of the main ideas in a discussion, they struggle to communicate their responses clearly. Weaknesses in this area are particularly apparent with older pupils who find it difficult to adapt speech to different purposes and are not always aware of the need to use standard English.
50. Teaching is good. There is generally a good balance between practice tasks and opportunities for pupils to write independently. In some lessons, a very good structure is provided to guide pupils through their tasks; some simple and clear written notes were helpful in enabling Year 6 pupils to pick out the key features of a text. Prompt sheets that highlight the main features of a leaflet or remind pupils how to organise the layout of a letter are also used well to support written work. While teachers are aware of the need to extend pupils' speaking skills, opportunities are missed to do this by, for example, encouraging pupils to rehearse their ideas in discussion before they start to write. Marking is usually evaluative and very focused, giving pupils clear indications of what they need to do to improve.
51. The subject is well led. Analysis of test results and checking up on planning and pupils' work leads to identification of areas for improvement and action to address any weaknesses. A good programme of in-service training has led to improvements in approaches to teaching reading and writing.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Pupils are encouraged to use their skills in a range of subjects across the curriculum. Year 2 pupils list key facts in geography and history and make notes and label diagrams in science. Year 4 pupils created 'Egyptian News' in history, showing good awareness of the layout and features of a newspaper. Year 6 show a good feel for journalistic language when writing the nativity story as a newspaper article. Pupils understand that they can find information on specific topics from books and know how to use the contents and index. However, research skills are limited by the inadequacy of the library, which does not enable pupils to work independently and to collate and sift information from a range of sources.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and standards are improving.
- Mathematics is well taught and well led and managed.

Commentary

53. Pupils generally make good progress and achieve well as they move through the school. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 because the teaching is consistently good. Progress is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4 where there have been some disruptions to teaching. Consistently good teaching in Years 5 and 6 ensures that pupils are now making up some lost ground.
54. By the end of Year 2, pupils are well on their way to having a clear understanding about how numbers work. They are increasingly familiar with basic operations and are beginning to use what they know to solve problems. For example, in Year 2, pupils can add up the cost of various items and calculate the amount of change they would get from given amounts. At the end of Year 6, pupils are more secure in using what they know, although too many do not have the instant recall of their tables, which they need to work quickly. They understand the relationship between decimals, fractions and percentages and can use this knowledge when working with money or units of measurement.
55. Good teaching and a well-planned curriculum are at the heart of the school's success. Lessons are well planned so that all children are sufficiently challenged. For example, a good lesson with Year 4 about symmetry made sure that the higher-attaining pupils had to think very carefully about reflecting complex shapes. Expectations are high, both in terms of how much work pupils do and how well they will behave. Just occasionally the pace of lessons, or part of a lesson, is not as rapid as it might be and this hinders the amount of progress some children could make. Resources are well used and the use of the very up-to-date technology in Years 4 and 6 makes a good contribution to the success of lessons.
56. Good subject management is also a key ingredient in the success. Information about test results is used very well to check on parts of the curriculum and how well pupils are doing. This is passed on to teachers so that they know which children need more support or help. There is regular checking up on teaching so that any improvements are identified. Teachers are also given good guidance in how to plan lessons. The guidance is effective in making sure that lessons build on what has been learned earlier in a sensible, straightforward manner.

Mathematics across the curriculum

57. Pupils use their numeracy skills across a range of subjects. Mathematics is used particularly in aspects of ICT when working on data handling and in science where pupils record the results of investigations. There are also some good links with geography where children begin to use surveying to plot traffic movements.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching helps pupils to achieve well but poor language skills sometimes inhibit their learning.
- Some higher-attaining pupils are not given sufficient opportunities for independent learning.
- There is a good focus on investigative work and this helps pupils understand new ideas.
- Good management has led to recent improvements in the subject.

Commentary

58. Pupils generally achieve well and make good gains in learning in all strands of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective support in classrooms and this enables them to fully participate in all activities and subsequently they also do well. The limited speaking skills of some pupils sometimes hinder learning. For example, a minority of Year 2 pupils did not draw as much benefit as they might when discussing together in small groups a range of plants and their respective properties. They had difficulty expressing themselves clearly about the things they observed and this made the sharing of ideas less fruitful than it might have been.
59. A key strength of the good teaching is the focus on practical work. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the opportunity for 'hands-on experience' and are progressing well in developing investigative skills. Their learning benefits because pupils more clearly recognise the relevance of much of the subject matter through this approach. Generally teachers plan well, ensuring that pupils are sufficiently challenged by appropriate learning activities. For example, when investigating flight and ways in which objects can be propelled over distance, Year 6 pupils worked effectively in small groups. They applied their investigative skills well, designing and carrying out their own tests. They made predications, took measurements, observed and drew conclusions.
60. Pupils are given a clear structure to help them to write up their work, particularly recording details of the investigations they have carried out. However, opportunities are sometimes lost to encourage the higher-attaining pupils to write independently and at some length about their investigating experiences and the things they have found out. These pupils have limited opportunities to research scientific ideas and topics for themselves using both reference books and the Internet. Recently, however, a small group of higher-attaining Year 5 pupils have benefited from working at a weekly science workshop held at a nearby high school. Experiences such as this and visits out of school, for example, by Year 2 to a local park area to study the plant life, help support the good curriculum provision. In lessons children behave well, work well together and display a good level of inquisitiveness.
61. Science is managed well, with good resources provided to support teaching. Good facilities are available around the school grounds for studying insect life and carrying out other environmental studies. Generally this facility is used well. For example, Year 4 pupils have done a survey linking small animals with an appropriate habitat. Since the last inspection, science has developed well. Effective support has been received from the local high school

and the LEA science adviser to help staff to plan more investigative work for pupils. This has impacted well. Teachers are now confident when encouraging pupils to carry out experiments.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well to attain good standards.
- There is a good level of resources.
- ICT is used well to support work in other subjects.

Commentary

62. Pupils make a good start in ICT in Years 1 and 2 and cover a lot of ground. They reach standards that are better than those often found. They work with data handling programs and art programs as well as using word processing to improve the appearance of their work.
63. The work in Years 3 to 6 is more varied. By the time they leave school, pupils have a sound grasp of the key skills needed to use ICT across a wide range of aspects including word processing, data handling and control technology. The current Year 6 pupils have some gaps in their experience; they are not as familiar with control technology or the use of sensors as they need to be. However, lower down the school pupils are becoming familiar with these two aspects of ICT. Pupils in Year 5 often make good progress across a number of aspects. Pupils use ICT very regularly in Years 4 to 6 but there is much more limited evidence of work in Year 3.
64. Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 ensures a good base in learning key skills. Teaching is knowledgeable and aspects of the subject are taught in depth so that pupils get plenty of practical experience. For example, pupils in Year 2 worked on data handling and produced a range of lists and block graphs organising a range of different information in an accessible and easily understood way. Year 4 pupils do well in getting to grips with using control technologies and quickly learned how to program the screen turtle. Lessons benefit from using LEA guidance as a basis for planning. However, there are some occasions when more could be covered in some lessons if the planning was used more flexibly to enable those pupils who learn new skills quickly to move on at a more rapid pace.
65. The subject is satisfactorily managed. There has been a good updating of the resources and ICT is beginning to make a positive contribution to lessons in other subjects. There is no uniform assessment of what children have done or how well they have done it. However, there are at least two teachers who are using different records that they have devised themselves. It is important that the same system is adopted to be used by all teachers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. This is a good feature of the subject. ICT is used across a wide range of subjects. Word processing is used regularly in literacy lessons and data handling in numeracy. There is also good use of ICT in art where children in Year 2, for instance, have created pictures using special effects on art programs. Year 6 pupils researched on the Internet as part of a design and technology project making slippers. They are also currently working on a multimedia presentation about their individual 'journeys to high school'. ICT is also used in science to

record experiments and also used as part of experiments as pupils use sensing software as part of their investigations.

HUMANITIES

67. Not enough lessons were seen in **geography** to make an overall judgement about the quality of provision. However, evidence from pupils' work and discussions with pupils indicate that geography is taught throughout the school, although the amount varies.
68. The work done by Year 2 pupils is of a good standard. Pupils get a good introduction to life in different countries through the travels of 'Barnaby Bear', they are introduced to the idea of land use surveys by looking at different buildings and there are good links with literacy as pupils create their own tourist guides. This builds on good work in Year 1 where pupils use ICT to create simple maps and also visit the local park and survey the different amenities and facilities.
69. Work in Years 3 to 6 is broadly in line with expected standards. Year 3 make some good links with history through the study of the locality, noting how much it has changed and what has brought about those changes. Work in Year 4 compares India and the UK. There is some work on local environmental issues and how they may be solved in the event of major developments. Work in Year 6 is more limited and is largely focused on a recent successful visit to Llandudno. Overall, the work in Years 3 to 6 does not build on the good start as well as it could.
70. Not enough teaching or work was seen in **history** to make a judgement on provision. Teachers' planning and the work seen suggest that the school implements the national recommendations for history. For example, pupils in Year 1 find out about the past through a study of toys from bygone ages and Year 2 study the seaside as it is now and as it was in former years. This way they get a feel for comparing times past with the present. Amongst other topics, Year 3 study the Romans in some depth and Years 4 and 5 study the Ancient Egyptians and the Ancient Greeks respectively. Year 6 study life in Victorian times. The work seen shows that there is a broad and well-planned curriculum in place for teaching the subject.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

No lessons were seen in these subjects and it is not possible to judge standards or the quality of provision.

71. In art and design, scrutiny of displays and samples of earlier work show that pupils have a range of opportunities to use different media to represent their ideas and observations. Younger pupils explore shade and tone, for example, in self-portraits and drawings of buildings. Year 6 pupils show a feel for proportion and perspective in 'snowy landscapes'. There is some opportunity to study the work of famous artists: Year 2 produced some good studies based on Monet's 'water lilies' including representation using ICT. Older pupils show some awareness of the techniques used by Picasso and Matisse.
72. There are some good examples of work in **design and technology (DT)** that show that pupils have opportunities to learn about all elements of the design and make process. Year 2 pupils make simple plans, for example, of model cars and finger puppets, showing that they think about the materials that they are going to use and ways of joining different components. In Year 4, pupils use simple mechanisms to make moving monsters and pop-up scenes. They

make good use of their scientific knowledge to produce detailed designs of circuits to make simple lights and to illuminate scenes. Year 6 pupils produced detailed designs for slippers, considering the suitability of materials for a specific user and paying good attention to the quality of the finished product.

73. Discussions with the subject manager indicate that the school offers a full programme of **physical education (PE)** including swimming and dance. Some pupils spoke about how much they enjoy PE lessons. The curriculum is supplemented by a range of extra-curricular activities and there are regular competitive games of football and netball against local schools.
74. Teachers' planning suggests that the curriculum for **music** is at least satisfactory. Pupils sing regularly in assemblies and the quality of singing is good. Pupils from Years 3 to 6 have the opportunity to sing in the school choir that meets each week to practise after school. The choir have recently enjoyed success in competition against choirs from other local schools. Competing in the Ramsbottom Musical Festival, the choir won first place in its class.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

75. Lessons in this subject were not observed during the inspection, therefore no overall judgment can be made about provision. A scheme of work is currently being developed following extensive staff training. Nonetheless, this aspect of the curriculum has high priority. All classes take part in regular circle time activities. These sessions contribute well to the development of pupils' self-esteem because they give them the chance to talk about their feelings and personal issues that are important to them. Pupils say circle time is really good because it helps everyone to get on and gives them the chance to "talk about things there isn't normally time for."
76. Lessons encourage pupils to lead a healthy lifestyle. Younger pupils get a free piece of fruit every day because the school takes part in the 'free fruit scheme'. Getting the fruit ready to share at morning break is an important job for some of the younger pupils. The school council wants to start a healthy tuck shop, so that older pupils can also get a healthy snack. A travel plan is in place in order to improve the safety of travel to and from school and to try to encourage more families to walk rather than take their car. The school arranged for pupils to benefit from a drugs education program run by a local football club.
77. During the time of the recent general elections, pupils held their own school council elections, closely following official procedures. The council includes pupils from all year groups, including Reception, a strong indication of the value placed on pupils' views. It gives them good opportunities to exchange ideas and gain an understanding of how communities work together.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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

