

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARK'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Worsley, Manchester

LEA area: Salford

Unique reference number: 105949

Headteacher: Jill Johnson

Lead inspector: John D Eadie

Dates of inspection: 16th - 19th May 2005

Inspection number: 267859

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:	334
School address:	Aviary Road Walkden Worsley Manchester Lancashire
Postcode:	M28 2WF
Telephone number:	(0161) 790 3423
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss F A Floyd
Date of previous inspection:	26 th April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Mark's is a Voluntary Aided Church of England school situated in a fairly affluent suburb of Salford in Greater Manchester. However, the school is popular and pupils come from a wide area with a significant number coming from much less advantaged neighbourhoods. This is reflected in children's attainment on entry to the school, which is average. The school won Schools Achievement Awards in 2000 and 2001 for performance in the national tests and an Activemark Award in 2003 for encouraging in pupils a healthy and active lifestyle. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their home language. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below average, as is the proportion of those with statements of their special need. The most significant special needs represented are speech and communication difficulties. The movement of pupils in and out of the school at times other than the normal times of joining or leaving is generally below average, although the current Year 4 has had an above average number of changes. There have been some staffing problems in the last couple of years, which have led to inconsistencies in provision, particularly for pupils in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20191	Mr J D Eadie	Lead inspector	Science Personal, social and health education and citizenship Modern foreign language (French)
13395	Mrs J Illingworth	Lay inspector	
1189	Mrs S Brown	Team inspector	English Geography History Physical education
32021	Mr A McClean	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language Mathematics Art and design Music
15015	Mr M Wehrmeyer	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Design and technology

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Mark's Church of England Primary School is a **good** school. Pupils are achieving well through the school and reaching well above average standards by the end of Year 6. They are learning well due to good teaching. The headteacher, who has only been in post since September, has made a good start and is supported well by the staff team. The school gives **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils are achieving well through the school and are reaching well above average standards by the time they leave.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and they are very good in Years 4 to 6.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Pupils' personal development is a high priority for the school. They have very good attitudes to their school and their work; they behave very well and relationships are excellent at all levels.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Time spent in teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is well below the national average and the curriculum for the whole school is not planned as coherently as it should be.
- Systems of assessment are not being used effectively to plan for the next stages in pupils' learning.
- The roles of the subject leaders are not well developed.

The school has made good progress since its previous inspection in 1999. All the key issues from the previous report have been addressed well, although work on some of these has only started recently due to changes in leadership. For example, teachers' performance is now regularly appraised and the governing body is now involved well in school development. Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes has also improved significantly and is now good. Well above average standards have been maintained over recent years.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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 are achieving **well**. They enter the Nursery with average levels of skills and knowledge and achieve well to reach standards above the goals children are expected to reach by the end of Reception in all areas of learning, except their physical development in which standards are average. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics are reached by the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science have risen to well above average and achievement is very good in Years 3 to 6. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average by the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well through the school because of the very clear targets that are set for their progress and the very good targeted support that they receive.

The pupils' personal qualities are developed very well and this is a high priority for the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Particular highlights are the excellent relationships that pupils have with each other and with staff, pupils' very high levels of self-esteem and confidence and the high expectations that are set for their behaviour. The school's promotion of strong relationships leads to exceptional racial harmony and understanding. Rates of attendance are well above the national average and punctuality is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a **good** quality of education. This is largely down to the **good** quality of teaching which is resulting in good learning. Some excellent lessons were observed during the inspection in Years 4 and 5. These lessons were typified by inspirational teaching which set very high demands on the pupils and provided them with constant challenges. The pupils rose superbly to the challenges, were enthused by the teaching and were fully involved in the work; they made excellent progress in these lessons. There are new systems of assessment in place, but these are not yet being used effectively to plan for the next stage of pupils' learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory although it is enriched very well by a wide range of visits, visitors into school and a number of very well attended after-school activities. Insufficient time is spent in teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 and there is not a sufficiently coherent plan for teaching topics in some subjects through the school to ensure continuous learning. Although this is not having a significant impact in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, it is resulting in standards in some other subjects not being as high as they should be. Pupils are cared for very well and are given good levels of guidance and support. Partnerships with parents, the community and other schools are very effective in aiding pupils' achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The new headteacher provides a very clear vision and sense of purpose for the school. She is supported well by others with leadership roles, although subject leaders are not given sufficient responsibility for monitoring and evaluating work in their subjects. Management is efficient at all levels. The governing body provides good support and their role is strengthening. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents at the meeting and their replies to the questionnaires are very positive about the school. They are particularly pleased that their children are happy at school and that teachers expect them to work hard. A small minority considers that they are not consulted sufficiently. However, the judgement from the inspection is that the school is good at seeking their views. Pupils overwhelmingly enjoy their school. In particular, they like the friendliness of staff and children and the trusting and safe atmosphere of the school. They have no significant concerns.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has already identified all of the following and improvements are planned. The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- To increase the time spent in teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 and ensure that the curriculum is coherently planned through the school.
- To ensure that systems of assessment are used consistently to help teachers to plan for the next stages of learning and ensure that pupils are involved in this process.
- To develop the roles of subject leaders.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils are achieving well through the school, though this achievement accelerates in Years 4, 5 and 6. By the time they leave they are reaching well above average standards from the average standards when they start at the school. The school has a very good commitment to inclusion, which ensures that all pupils achieve equally well. Those pupils with special educational needs achieve very well due to the very good provision that is made for them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are achieving well through the school.
- Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.
- Standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Standards have been consistently well above average in the national tests at the end of Year 6 for some years.

Commentary

1. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2004 were well above average in mathematics and above average in reading and writing. When compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards were average in all three subject areas. The trend in results has been below the national trend over recent years. The major reason for this is the disruption to staffing in recent years in Years 1 and 2 and the Reception class.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.0 (18.7)	15.8 (15.7)
writing	15.6 (16.4)	14.6 (14.6)
mathematics	17.4 (18.6)	16.2 (16.3)

There were 43 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In the national tests in 2004 at the end of Year 6, standards were well above average in English, mathematics and science. When compared with schools whose pupils scored similarly in the national tests at the end of Year 2 four years previously, standards were well above average in English, above average in science and average in mathematics. These well above average standards have been maintained for some years. However, the rate of improvement in standards has been below the national average in recent years despite the gaining of Schools Achievement Awards in 2000 and 2001. This is explained by relatively poorer results in 2004 due to staffing problems, which meant that the pupils did not receive their usual levels of support. The results in 2000 were exceptionally good, reflecting the abilities of this group of pupils; this has had an adverse affect on the trend.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.7 (29.6)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	28.9 (29.2)	27.0 (26.8)
science	30.6 (30.8)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 45 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Children start in the Nursery with average levels of skills and knowledge. They achieve well to reach standards above those expected by the end of Reception in almost all areas of learning. The only exception is in their physical development, where standards are average at the end of Reception. Much of the reason for this is the shortage of outside equipment to enable children in the Reception classes to explore and challenge their physical boundaries.
4. In Years 1 and 2, achievement is satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. There have been significant staffing issues in these year groups during the last year or so and this is much of the reason why standards are not higher. Standards in ICT are average by the end of Year 2.
5. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is very good overall, although it improves from being good in Year 3 to very good in Years 4 to 6. Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Standards in ICT are average at the end of Year 6.
6. The school makes particularly good provision for those pupils with special educational needs. These pupils' needs are identified early and this results in them receiving good support on entry to school and as long as their special needs continue. Regular reviews of their progress and careful updating of individual plans ensures their very good achievement. There are no significant differences between the achievement of girls and boys. The very small number of pupils who are of other heritages achieve equally as well as their classmates.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' values and personal qualities make a major contribution to their good achievement and to the life of the school. They have very positive attitudes to learning and their attendance is very good. They behave very well and have excellent relationships with others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils like coming to school and attend regularly and punctually.
- They enjoy lessons and are keen to take part in extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils are extremely confident and have very high self-esteem.
- The school is very successful in promoting high standards of conduct, positive values and excellent relationships.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural development has improved since the previous inspection and is now very good.

Commentary

7. Pupils enjoy being at school and have very good attitudes to learning. The majority of them say that they find their lessons interesting and fun. They are enthusiastic about school trips and extra-curricular activities, and their level of involvement in the latter is high. Pupils' very positive attitudes are reflected in their attendance and punctuality. The school's attendance rate is well above the national average, and the incidence of unauthorised absence is low. Their very good attendance helps them to make the most of their opportunities for learning.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.1	School data	0.0
National data	5.1	National data	0.4

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

8. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning and eagerness to succeed are major factors in their good achievement. They come to lessons expecting to learn and to work hard. They are keen to achieve well and love to share what they know and can do. They are very confident about expressing themselves orally. Hands shoot up all over the classroom when teachers ask them questions or seek their views. Pupils are good independent learners who work well on their own in lessons and persevere when faced with difficult tasks. Most of them are willing to 'have a go' even when they are not sure that they have the right answer. Pupils have positive attitudes even when they find teaching is relatively uninteresting, as when they are required to sit and listen to instructions for long periods. The majority of them remain attentive and keen to learn.
9. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They observe classroom rules, treat property with respect and take care of their environment. The quality of relationships in the school is excellent. Pupils are polite, considerate and co-operative. They work well together in lessons in pairs and groups, learning from each other and sharing ideas. There were two fully justified fixed period exclusions last year. These were not typical for the school and were fully supported by the parents of these pupils.

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	288	2	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	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.

10. Pupils' behaviour and relationships reflect the school's Christian values and very good provision for moral and social development. Moral issues are covered in assemblies and personal and social education lessons and are promoted well in practice through the school's code of conduct, behaviour policy and daily routines. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. Members of staff have high expectations regarding behaviour, and deal firmly but sensitively with any breaches of the rules. They act as good role models. They treat pupils with respect and enhance their self-esteem through regular but justified use of praise and formal rewards. Provision for social development is very good. The school encourages pupils to accept responsibility and to use their initiative. Pupils' extensive involvement in charity fundraising is a strength in this area. They play a leading role in choosing which charities to support and in organising events to raise money for them.
11. Provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Spirituality is now promoted very well through daily assemblies, church services, and the school's curriculum for religious education. There is a planned programme for the acts of worship that take place in assembly, based on a theme for the week. This gives all pupils very good opportunities to reflect on moral themes and to contemplate their own place in the world. National Curriculum subjects also make a major contribution to provision for spirituality. When the quality of teaching is excellent or very good in any subject, pupils experience feelings of excitement and wonder. Their curiosity is awakened and they begin to look for a deeper meaning, as was the case with pupils in Year 5 in their work on rivers.

12. The school has successfully addressed the weaknesses in pupils' cultural development that were identified by the previous inspection. It has greatly enhanced their awareness of other cultures through extending its provision for multicultural education. Its efforts have been particularly effective in art and design, as can be seen from the excellent displays of pupils' artwork in different styles from around the world. The school also works very effectively to promote understanding of local history and culture. It has arranged a varied programme of visits to museums, theatres, and other places of interest in order to develop pupils' appreciation of their local environment and heritage.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good and the pupils are learning well. The curriculum is satisfactory although insufficient time is spent in teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 and the curriculum is not sufficiently well planned throughout Years 1 to 6. The curriculum is very well enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors into school. Pupils are well cared for. Links with parents, the community and other schools are particularly effective in aiding pupils' achievement.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good and so pupils are learning well. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but have not been in place for long enough to be used well to plan for pupils' future learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a higher than usual proportion of excellent teaching.
- Teachers provide good encouragement for pupils, who respond well with good levels of application.
- High standards of behaviour are expected and the school is an orderly learning environment.
- Assessment is at an early stage of development and is not being used effectively to help teachers and pupils plan for the next stage of learning.

Commentary

13. Although the quality of teaching is good overall, there are significant inconsistencies between year groups. Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is good, as is the teaching in Year 3. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is satisfactory, whilst in Years 4 to 6, it is very good. Learning is therefore similarly varied, starting well, slowing in Years 1 and 2 and improving through the rest of the school. A higher than usual number of excellent lessons was observed. All of these occurred in Years 4 and 5, and all but one of the very good lessons were in Years 4 to 6. There are high levels of challenge for higher attainers through most of the school, which is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Parents share the view that teaching is good and are particularly pleased with these high levels of challenge that their children are offered.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 51 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (10%)	6 (12%)	27 (53%)	13 (25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

14. The excellent lessons were exemplified by inspirational teaching which enthused the pupils and set them very high levels of challenge. The pupils rose to these challenges and some very sophisticated discussions were heard in group work. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson, the teacher had provided a very wide range of resources, which excited and

interested the pupils. Their resulting discussions planned lifestyle changes and healthy, but always reasonable, eating habits for the variety of scenarios set by the teacher. The pupils made extremely well reasoned arguments for their choices, some for example making a clear case for banning such things as sweets and alcohol totally in some households, whilst others took a more moderate, but equally validly argued view. The preparation for this lesson had been exceptional, with clearly targeted homework, preparing some groups for their particular task, very interesting and varied lifestyle scenarios, all immediately relevant to the pupils, and a wide range of other stimuli, which appeared at regular intervals throughout the lesson, including bags full of food and drinks to suit each scenario. Pupils were observed poring over the information sheets that they had and were studying the fine print on the labels of the foodstuffs to ensure balance in their planned diets.

15. Throughout the school, teachers are good at encouraging pupils. This leads to very good levels of self-esteem and confidence, which enhance learning. This self-confidence is particularly evident in those pupils with special educational needs who are fully integrated into the life of the school. Very good support by the limited number of teaching assistants for these pupils is evident. Close liaison in planning and teaching between all staff and the special needs co-ordinator results in these pupils making very good progress and achieving very well. A further general strength of teaching is the high standard of behaviour expected. Pupils respond very well to these high standards and classrooms are purposeful and orderly environments in which the pupils find it easy to concentrate.
16. In the relatively weaker lessons, which were all at least satisfactory, there were a few general areas for development, particularly in Years 1 and 2. The most significant of these were a slower pace to lessons, some over-direction by teachers and the weakness in the targeting of teaching assistants to aid learning. There were times when teaching assistants sat passively rather than being actively involved in aiding the learning process. This is in direct contrast to the very good support given by these assistants when supporting pupils with special educational needs. In some instances, the inactivity of teaching assistants was aggravated by a lack of pace, the pupils sitting on the carpet and listening for too long. There were occasions in Years 1 to 3 where pupils were given insufficient independence in their learning, the exact opposite of what was found in Years 4 to 6. For example, in a science experiment, where the pupils' only involvement was holding their containers, while the teacher added the necessary items for them.
17. Assessment is a priority in the current school improvement plan. As putting in place systems of assessment was a key issue at the previous inspection, this represents slow progress. However, this progress has been hampered by a number of changes in leadership in the intervening years. Effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and setting them future targets have now been developed and are in place for most subjects. However, they are still at an early stage of development and are not yet being used effectively to enable teachers to plan for the next stages in pupils' learning. Neither are they able to be used to give pupils a clear idea of what they need to learn next to improve. The exception to this is in the Foundation Stage, where there are thorough systems which are used very well. Some subject leaders are working on 'child friendly' statements of key skills, which will help to address the weaknesses.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. The school provides a broad range of worthwhile curricular opportunities. There are very good opportunities for enrichment and the curriculum is supported by a very good range of extra-curricular activities, visitors and visits. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. They are good in Years 1 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Time spent in teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is well below the national average and the curriculum for the whole school is not planned as coherently as it should be.
- Cross-curricular links are very good, enabling pupils to study in depth, build good knowledge and develop high level skills.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The curriculum is enriched very well by a wide range of visits and visitors and pupils benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

18. Children in the Foundation Stage learn well because of the good range of activities planned, promoting their development well in all areas of learning. This has been improved well since the previous inspection.
19. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum with a range of very worthwhile experiences across subjects. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. National guidelines have been used in some subjects to develop a two-year rolling programme but planning the curriculum for the whole school is not as coherent as it should be to ensure continuous learning. At present, there is no clear overview of the curriculum. Pupils in the same year group sometimes receive different experiences and opportunities. Examples of this were seen in subjects such as history and geography. This is not so much the case in English, mathematics and science, where the curriculum is planned well. Time spent in teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 is well below the national average although the school is looking into redesigning the school day to rectify this. The shortage of time adversely affects the progress pupils make. Cross-curricular links are a strength, enabling pupils to study in depth, build very good knowledge and develop high level skills. This was shown in the outstanding practice in Year 5 where literacy, mathematics, science and geography were interwoven through a study of rivers, enriching pupils' knowledge and enhancing skills and learning exceptionally well.
20. With the focus on 'excellence and enjoyment' the school has adopted greater flexibility, for example, with the National Literacy Strategy and particularly in the creative arts. The positive impact of this was seen in many lessons where excitement and fun went hand in hand with high expectations and high standards. Pupils are provided with a range of very good quality experiences in the creative and aesthetic aspects of the curriculum that enrich their spiritual and cultural development considerably. The use of music, video and photography, for example, greatly enriched the Year 5 poetry writing linked to their geography study based on rivers. Year 6 pupils enjoy French and achieve effectively due to the school's partnership with the local high school.
21. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. These pupils make very good progress relative to their abilities as a result of very well targeted support and very specific targets. The weakness in support where other adults sit passively is much less noted in support for pupils with special educational needs, where the support assistants are usually involved with their pupils throughout lessons.
22. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Despite this, the subject leader is working on a scheme of work to ensure fuller coverage in her desire to raise achievement in this subject further. Personal, social and health education permeates the curriculum and contributes effectively to pupils' personal development.
23. Support for learning outside the school day is very good. The school offers a wide range of activities in which many pupils participate. For example, many successes are enjoyed by the school's football, netball, cricket, athletics and cross-country teams. The school is rightly proud of its vast display of sporting trophies and awards, including the national Activemark

Award for promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. A wide range of educational visits to museums and galleries, churches and theatres support the curriculum very well, as do the many visitors to the school. A wide range of instrumental tuition is provided by visiting specialists. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, supported by the good links established with the local high school.

24. There is a good number of teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum. The number of support staff is adequate but is less than is found in many primary schools. The accommodation is of good quality and is bright and stimulating. Good quality resources are in place for most subjects.

Care, guidance and support

The school gives pupils good support, guidance and advice and makes good provision for their health, safety and welfare. It successfully involves pupils in its work by seeking and valuing their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a healthy and safe environment for its pupils.
- Members of staff know pupils very well as individuals and care about their welfare.
- Pupils have very trusting relationships with adults in the school.
- There is good support for pupils' academic progress.
- Parents are happy with the school's induction programme.

Commentary

25. The school takes effective steps to promote pupils' welfare. It has good procedures for dealing with health and safety matters, such as risk assessment, and its provision for first aid is very good. Arrangements for child protection are sound, although the headteacher, who has recently taken over the lead role, is aware of the need for further training on the issue. The school is a safe place where pupils feel secure and free from harassment. Standards of behaviour are very high and the level of supervision during break and lunch hours is satisfactory overall. However some of the supervisors in the infants' playground do not engage constructively with pupils, and have an abrupt manner when managing behaviour. This is a matter of concern to some parents, who feel that their children should be treated more sensitively. The lack of play equipment is another weakness. It is an issue which pupils would like to see addressed as soon as possible. In other respects, pupils are very well looked after outside normal lesson hours. A breakfast club and an after-school club on the school site provide good 'wrap around care'.
26. Parents think that the school is successful in helping pupils to settle in when they join the school. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, more than nine out of ten parents said that the induction arrangements for their children were good, and inspectors agree with their views. Older pupils receive good preparation for the next stage of their education. St Mark's works closely with the local high school over the transfer arrangements. Pupils in Year 6 say that they have attended the high school open evening and are looking forward to attending its induction day.
27. Pupils receive very good personal care and guidance. Teachers know them very well as individuals and are able to monitor their progress very effectively on an informal basis. They identify any problems and provide support that meets each pupil's specific needs. The excellent quality of pupil-teacher relationships enhances the provision of pastoral care. Pupils feel that members of staff are friendly and caring. They regard them as people to whom they can go for help if they have a problem.

28. The school provides pupils with good guidance on their academic progress. A great deal of information on attainment is on display on classroom walls, together with class targets for improvement. As a result, pupils feel that they have a good general understanding of national curriculum levels and what their teachers expect them to achieve in lessons. Although the school has begun to involve them in self-assessment and monitoring their own progress, pupils' knowledge of their own learning is still often insecure. Some of them are uncertain as to how they can improve their work. They are either unaware of any individual targets for improvement, or they do not know precisely what they are.
29. There are good arrangements for consulting pupils. Personal and social education lessons make a valuable contribution in this area. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to use them as a time to express their views to members of staff. There are effective formal consultations with Years 3 to 6 via the school council. Pupils in these year groups agree that the council has real influence in the running of the school. Representatives meet once a month to discuss important whole-school issues such as behaviour and supervision at lunchtime. Overall, pupils are very happy with way that the school takes their opinions into account. In the pre-inspection questionnaire more than nine out of ten pupils said that their teachers listened to their ideas.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership with parents and links with the community and other schools are very good and make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very supportive of the school and make a very valuable contribution to their children's learning.
- Members of staff are available to talk to parents at any reasonable time.
- The school provides good information on pupils' learning and progress.
- The school's links with partner institutions and the local community enrich its curriculum.

Commentary

30. Most parents think very highly of the school. In their answers to the pre-inspection questionnaire parents were unanimous in saying that children like school and teachers expect pupils to work hard. They were also very pleased with their children's progress, the quality of teaching and arrangements for helping new pupils to settle into the school. A minority of parents think that their opinions are not adequately taken into account. Inspectors have therefore looked very closely at the school's procedures, but, after examining all the evidence, do not support this minority view. Inspectors judge that the arrangements for consulting parents are good. To aid good communication with parents, the school operates an open door policy. Parents are able to speak to members of staff informally before or at the end of the school day, and some of them have regular meetings with their children's teachers. Others regularly use e-mail to communicate with the school. At present, the school does not consult parents by means of general questionnaires on its work, but it does ask them for their views on specific issues, such as school meals. Currently, it is consulting them on proposed changes to the school day, as is required by law.
31. The school provides parents with good information on its work and their children's progress. Pupils' homework diaries are used effectively for two-way communication between home and school. Some teachers use them to review pupils' work and comment on their achievement. Parents are well briefed on school events via monthly newsletters, and the school's open evening in September gives them a good opportunity to learn about routines, organisation of classes, and the curriculum. The quality of information on progress is good. Parents of children in the Reception class receive good written reports at the end of the school year. The reports on older pupils are satisfactory. The targets for improvement are their weakest

features. They are too broad to give parents and pupils effective guidance on raising attainment. However, parents are given more information on pupils' strengths, weaknesses and targets for improvement at consultation evenings. They also get the opportunity to discuss the annual reports with their children's teachers.

32. Parents are very supportive of pupils' learning. Although some of them take family holidays in term time, they otherwise make every effort to ensure that their children attend school. They give very strong support to school performances, trips and extra-curricular activities. They are keenly interested in their children's progress, as the very high level of attendance at parents' consultation evenings shows. Parents are actively and constructively involved in their children's learning; for example, they regularly hear their younger children read at home. The school greatly values the contribution that parents make. It regards the input of parental expertise into the curriculum as a significant strength, especially in respect of music, art and design and sport. It also is very appreciative of the work of a group of parents who raise funds to provide the school with extra resources.
33. The school has a very good partnership with the local community. Its very strong links with the parish church enrich the curriculum and enhance pupils' spiritual development effectively. The Rector takes weekly school worship and a termly Eucharist, and pupils attend the church for services. The school makes very good use of the local area and local businesses as resources for learning. For example, when Year 5 used 'selling houses' as a subject for their persuasive writing, they visited local houses and received advice from a local estate agent. Visits to museums and theatres in Salford, Manchester and Chester make a positive contribution to the school's provision for cultural development. Older pupils have more opportunities to benefit from educational trips than their younger colleagues.
34. There is a very good partnership between St Mark's and other schools in the area. The school co-operates very closely with the local high school over the transfer of pupils to secondary education, and curricular links are strong in French, mathematics, art and design, music and sport. These contacts promote the progress of all pupils, but are of particular value to those who are gifted and talented. St Marks also has a good working relationship with a local independent secondary school to which some pupils go after they complete Year 6.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good, a view shared by parents. The headteacher, who has been in post since September, is leading the school well and she is supported well by staff with leadership responsibilities. The role of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating standards in their subjects is insufficiently developed. Management is efficient at all levels. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear sense of purpose and vision for the future development of the school.
- The school's evaluation of areas for development and planning to address these is very good.
- The role of governors has strengthened and they have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The roles of subject leaders are not sufficiently developed.

Commentary

35. The headteacher, in her short time in post, has made a good start. She has a very clear vision for the development of the school. This is shown in the very effective school improvement plan, where very good priorities for development have been set. One of the strengths of the plan is that it is challenging whilst not being too ambitious; very realistic targets having been set for each of the next three years. The headteacher has created a very

good team spirit in the school, where all work hard to achieve the best for the pupils. She is supported well by those with leadership roles, but subject leaders do not have sufficient responsibility for monitoring and evaluating standards in their own subject. Effective deployment of the co-ordinator for special educational needs, who carries out the role very successfully, is a result of her being given dedicated time to concentrate upon developing the full potential of all pupils with special needs. This is in keeping with the very good ethos of the school. Inclusion is a high priority for the school and is very effective, particularly important with the small number of pupils of other heritages in the school.

36. Management is good at all levels. The headteacher leads the evaluation of the school's performance very well. The self-evaluation form completed before inspection was thorough in its use of available evidence and perceptive in its view of strengths and areas for development. All the main judgements in that form were confirmed by the inspection, except that the school was a little pessimistic about the links with parents, the community and other schools, which they only judged as good, recognising links that they still wish to strengthen. Monitoring of performance data is in its early stages, but the school has already established the need, for example, to focus more clearly on the implementation of the presentation of the science curriculum in a more investigative and experimental way.
37. The school operates smoothly in its day-to-day running, a major contributor being the experienced and very competent school administrator. The major improvement in management since the previous inspection has been the professional development of teachers, which was a weakness then. Teacher's professional development is now appraised regularly and is planned in conjunction with the school improvement plan. Alongside this, teachers and other staff are given opportunities for training for their own personal development. Although the school had a significant overspend in the 2003 to 2004 financial year, this was because of some exceptional one-off payments. This deficit has been eliminated and the school is carrying forward a reasonable proportion of income of less than three per cent to the current year. This shows good management of finances.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	721,922	Balance from previous year	23,960
Total expenditure	773,497	Balance carried forward to the next year	-27,615
Expenditure per pupil	2,120		

38. A further improvement since the previous inspection has been the role of governors. Governance is now good and they are fully involved in development planning and very aware of their responsibilities. An innovative and successful initiative has been the formation of a strategic committee. This committee has ensured the governors' fuller involvement in many aspects of the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. Governors are particularly well aware of the strengths and areas for development of the school and ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Foundation Stage provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The changes that the school has made have brought about a much more consistent approach to the Foundation Stage philosophy of structured play. Teaching and learning are also more consistent in quality, being good overall. The ongoing assessment of children's attainment and the tracking of their progress are very good. This has a very positive impact on inclusion, with tasks and activities matched very closely to children's needs. It also enables staff to give very good information to parents, a feature they particularly value. The very good links with parents have been maintained, and this explains why children settle so quickly and are very happy to come to school.

The Reception Year is organised to allow the children from the two classes to mix together for much of the time. This system works well and enables resources to be shared and the children to get used to more adults. Some children have been identified for concern about special educational needs. They are supported well and the staff monitor their progress closely.

The Foundation Stage leaders have ensured that the outside play facilities have been improved well since the previous inspection, creating two busy and exciting secure outdoor areas. This complements the good overall curriculum arrangements well. Adventurous climbing equipment for the Reception children is limited, and this inhibits the potential for their physical development. Thus, resourcing overall is only satisfactory. Next year, the Foundation Stage is the priority in the school improvement plan and funding is planned to be available to rectify this.

Staff share their ideas in planning well, and all activities are very well suited to the needs and interests of the age range in the classes. The curriculum is particularly well balanced over the six areas of learning. The formal recording of attainment at the end of Reception is now more precise in the form of the national profile. Data is compiled for children on entry to Nursery, but the two sets of records are not directly comparable at present, so that the school does not have a quick reference format for judging the value added by teaching over the two years.

The children's skills on entry to the Nursery are average, although there is a wide spectrum of attainment. Because of the good teaching, which creates ideal conditions for learning, children make consistently good progress. By the time they leave Reception the children have achieved well to exceed the expected level in the early learning goals in five of the areas of learning. Physical development tails off a little and is satisfactory.

There have been some significant changes in the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage. The current arrangements are recent and certainly satisfactory. The staff work closely together and have a clear vision of exciting developments for the future. A detailed self-evaluation process has resulted in an effective action plan to guide the course of the stage, and the monitoring of teaching and learning is a key area identified. The Foundation Stage provides a good preparation for the children's next stage of learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships between children and adults create an atmosphere of effective learning.

- Very good planning creates good opportunities and routines for children to interact and mature.
- Children learn to concentrate and persevere very well and are particularly confident in selecting and following their own preferences.

Commentary

39. This area of learning is central to the Foundation Stage ethos. Everything is geared to enabling children to grow in confidence and social skills in an atmosphere of calm routine. Children are not forced but develop at their own pace. They love to explore the wide range of learning areas and are developing interests and beginning to make friends. When they start in Nursery, many are hesitant in mixing with others and not too confident in the strange new surroundings. They quickly gain confidence and soon share and take turns. With good teaching and sensitive encouragement from the staff, they extend their ideas of right and wrong and learn to co-operate well in small groups. At first, their interests wax and wane, but over quite a short time they develop clearer interests and much more concentration in activities like painting and play in the 'travel agency'.
40. Later in the year children can sit and listen with attention, move about in an orderly fashion and relate to each other and to adults in a mature way. Later again, in Reception, the children are ready to act as good role models for the new starters, and as good helpers for the staff. They learn responsibility by doing jobs around the classrooms and are happy in helping to tidy up. They build well on the confidence gained in the Nursery, begin to select interests in 'hard' areas such as book writing, where many sit for lengthy periods persevering with their work. This is an above average level, reached by good, unobtrusive teaching, feeding in particularly high expectations for behaviour. Most children achieve well and they exceed the early learning goals in this area by the end of the Reception Year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reading is taught well and children's listening is developed effectively.
- Role-playing is a strength, giving children the chance to develop their speaking, and is one of many activities that act as a spur to writing.
- Children struggle a little with pronunciation.

Commentary

41. Teachers plan carefully to provide a structured range of activities specifically to develop the children's language skills, which are of an overall average standard when they start in the Nursery. Children make good progress throughout the stage and achieve well to mostly exceed the early learning goals by the end of Reception. Children achieve very well in most aspects of reading, learning to link letters and the sounds they represent well in the Nursery, and more about the meanings of words and sentences in Reception. The children love stories and learn to relish new words in the exciting or humorous books like "Whatever next" or "The Grumble" that teachers read to them. In the regular reading sessions, the children handle books, turn the pages and follow the story through pictures. Bit by bit, they learn to recognise words and begin to follow the sense of the tale. In discussions about books, and many other things, the staff encourage children to listen to each other with increasing attention.
42. There is a particular emphasis on the basic skills of speaking. The staff ensure that the children have interesting things to play with and talk about. The teaching is good because the adults enthusiastically join the children in their play. It is not unusual to see staff sitting in cardboard box rockets, with colanders on their heads as they lead a group into vivid exploration of some distant space target. They model the language the children might use,

well. Some teachers pick up children's difficulty with pronunciation, but this is not done consistently. The many role-play situations are popular and children chatter away in them.

43. Writing develops well as the children's mark-making gives way to carefully formed letters. Children learn to write words and labels first and then short sentences. Children are gaining much confidence and are proud of their skills. Many use their free choice time to write their own storybooks, with very positive attitudes and mostly excellent behaviour. Inclusion is very good. Teachers monitor the children's progress very well, and quickly identify any children who are falling behind.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables children to learn well through practical activities.
- Mathematical skills are put to good use across many areas of learning.
- Children are very good at counting but not so sure about simple problem-solving.

COMMENTARY

44. The staff use a wide range of practical activities well to help children's understanding of number, shape, space and position. Consequently, children achieve well as they move from an overall average starting point into the Nursery, to mostly exceed the early learning goals by the time they finish their time in Reception. The teachers use interesting and exciting mathematical and play equipment to allow children to explore number, pattern and shape. In the Nursery, children are counting to ten, and recognising the shape of the numbers. Staff use incidental opportunities well to push up the range whenever possible. For instance, in the cake baking, Nursery children realised the cooking time necessary was 15 minutes, and the teacher had them counting to 15 and finding 15 on the timer. Children often select their own moments to go to role-play areas like the travel agency, checking the money in the till, using large numbers, for example in "50 miles to Rome", and making notes of their booking times.
45. The teachers create good learning conditions, where children want to find out more and experiment with the equipment provided. All the children love the construction equipment and are gaining a good sense of position, shape and space from it. Staff use precise assessment observations very well. These guide them in preparing the next steps of learning for individual children. Skilled questioning helps children develop their own thinking, curiosity and confidence. One boy counted his skipping to 110. The teacher asked him to write the numbers on the outside blackboard, which he tackled confidently, getting to 111. Some children are not as quick at solving simple practical problems, and the number rhymes and jingles that would help them were scarce during the inspection.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching provides children with numerous opportunities to learn about the world around them, particularly in the Nursery.
- There is a great variety of resources, visits and visitors to enrich the learning.
- The children's sense of curiosity is stimulated very well.

COMMENTARY

46. Very good teaching in the Nursery produces very effective learning conditions and enables children to make very good progress. This is an area in which children enter school with generally average levels of experience, but somewhat restricted language to express their impressions. Many opportunities are provided for children to develop their own interests, exploring the classroom and the many displays in it. They have studied the seashore and the lifelike displays still engage the children, fascinated by the multicultural aspect of communities where water is scarce. Information books play a big part in their learning. In the baking activity, they learn to observe mixing closely, weigh ingredients and time the process, appreciating that the materials change. This prompts many questions, including "Would it be alright to eat a bumblebee?" which sets off a debate about health and safety to satisfy their curiosity. They are taught to use their senses well, but the sense of smell is somewhat overlooked.
47. This curiosity is harnessed further in Reception, as the children go looking outside for signs of life, mini-beasts and plants. They find out more using good computer software. Reception staff use fairy tales well as a source to interest children in geography. Children are enthralled in building the "Three Billy Goats" habitat, learning about routes with bridges and rivers and countryside while choosing suitable materials to represent these. They talk about families and growth and how months measure the passage of time. The staff celebrate a wide range of festivals enabling the children to learn simple religious ideas about special places and people. Good teaching in Reception maintains the good progress so that by the end of the year most children exceed the early learning targets and achieve well.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much improved space and equipment in the Nursery promotes good progress.
- Children have many opportunities to develop co-ordination and finger control.
- Lack of suitable large equipment inhibits the Reception children's skills in climbing, jumping and balancing, and adventurous exploration.

Commentary

48. Children start Nursery with physical skills generally at the expected level. By handling a wide range of small items and tools, their finger control is gradually refined to the point where they can handle tools to express themselves more precisely. In the creative area they make models with a precision that satisfies them. They handle brushes well enough to paint recognisable features. Good teaching provides more opportunities than during the previous inspection, and resources have improved and are used well. Children make good progress and by the end of the Nursery the finger control skills are transferring to clear formation of letters for writing.
49. The development of physical skill with large equipment is good through the Nursery year, because the play area is well supplied with appropriate equipment. This progress tails off in Reception where resources are limited. The indoor physical education sessions contribute well to creativity, but are no substitute for vigorous exercise and exploration of the potential of challenging large play material. Teaching is therefore satisfactory, as is achievement.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good direct teaching of skills is combined with good opportunities to learn through play.
- Staff provide an exciting range of activities that enhances the children's imagination.

Commentary

49. The previous inspection found creativity to be very ordinary. This is no longer the case. Most children start Nursery with the expected level of imagination and make-believe. The Nursery is well set up to allow them to meet new ideas and experiences and build these into their play, which grows steadily more imaginative. There is a wealth of opportunities for imaginative play in the small world scenarios, with the variety of construction kits, in the 'travel agent's' and outside in the purpose drawn road routes. The teaching is good and soon draws children out of themselves to experiment with this role play, explore paint and musical instruments. Children love to try different mixes and observe the effects.
50. Children achieve equally well in Reception. Staff continue to model the sheer fun of creativity with lively teaching. Their wide range of stimulating and fun activities enables the children to build further on their talents. They respond particularly well to stories, and like to dress up and act them out in their play. They get intensely involved, like the boy 'Wolf' who was stressed by the '3 Pigs' who would only build houses of bricks in the outside area. He had his quota to meet; "You must build houses of straw and sticks as well, so I can blow them down". Overall children achieve well, and by the end of Reception most exceed early learning goals for this area of learning.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6.
- In Years 4 to 6, pupils of different abilities achieve very well as a result of very good quality teaching.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and so they achieve very well.
- Excellent relationships and very good attitudes to learning enable pupils to learn successfully and become independent learners.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Handwriting and presentation in Years 1 and 2 is not as good as it could be. There are too few opportunities for pupils in Year 2 to write at length.
- Marking is inconsistent and is not always linked to targets set.

Commentary

52. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6. They are above average by the end of Year 2. The good standards found at the previous inspection have been sustained in Years 1 and 2 and improved well in Years 3 to 6. Last year, the National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils indicated well above average standards. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. It is very good in Years 3 to 6, with the best achievement in Year 5 as a result of excellent teaching.

53. In Years 1 and 2 there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills across all subjects. By the end of Year 2, pupils of all abilities speak confidently and listen attentively in a variety of contexts. These skills are built upon very effectively in Years 3 to 6, so that by the end of Year 6, many pupils demonstrate well above average speaking and listening skills. They have a very good command of standard English, using a wide variety of complex vocabulary with very good understanding. In discussions, pupils listen attentively and value the contributions of other pupils. They ask questions to develop ideas and make contributions that take account of others' views, as was seen in a Year 6 lesson on autobiographies, where pupils examined the autobiographies of Roald Dahl, Kenny Dalglish and Ian Botham.
54. Standards in reading are well above average across the school. Year 2 pupils read with accuracy and fluency. The majority have secure phonic skills and a good range of strategies to help them read more complex vocabulary. These skills are built upon successfully in Years 3 to 6 so that by the end of Year 6, pupils read a wide range of texts – fiction and non-fiction – with very good fluency and expression. They express preferences for authors, poets and styles well. Dialogue and punctuation are used for effect. Pupils are supported well at home with reading.
55. Standards in writing are above average by the end of Year 2. They are well above average by the end of Year 6 with accelerated progress in the Year 5 class as a result of excellent teaching. In Years 1 and 2, higher attaining pupils' writing is organised, imaginative and clear with good use of punctuation to mark sentences. They use descriptive language well with words such as "desperately", "glorious" and "eager", frequently chosen to enhance writing. Pupils write for a good range of purposes. The writing of all pupils communicates meaning in both narrative and non-narrative forms. Handwriting and presentation is inconsistent. Whilst a good number join their writing and form letters accurately, a significant minority are still insecure with letter formation, size and joins. In Year 6, many pupils use powerful descriptions and increasingly use more complex sentences. There is good attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation. Many used persuasive language to very good effect when they produced brochures to enable pupils to visit a 'living centre on the moon'. The task captured the imagination of all pupils who produced imaginative and creative ideas of a very high standard.
56. Pupils present well-balanced arguments, recounts of theatre visits, newspaper reports, biographies and autobiographies. Reporting about a catastrophic storm, one pupil wrote "a disastrous storm occurred and wreaked havoc, leaving a devastating trail of destruction in its wake!" Poetry writing in Year 5, based on work in geography on river studies, was outstanding. In the lesson, pupils worked collaboratively with great excitement and maturity to produce poems in the first person based on a river's journey from source to sea: "Its melted sapphire wax seeping through a landscape of green grass", wrote one pupil, "A never ending stream of sparkling tears, cried from a lonely child", wrote another. "A crystal blue snake starts to weave a narrow path down the hillside from the spring". Another began, "I start my long busy journey high up in the peaceful, isolated mountains ... diving over the giant rocks ... Twisting and gradually turning, I begin to come to life! Dancing and prancing, spitting and splashing, as I gradually make my way down the steep, clopping mountain." Inspired by outstanding teaching, every pupil worked excitedly and enjoyed success. There was a great sense of pride in their achievements as they presented their work to the class to a background of river music. Speaking and listening skills were well above average in this outstanding celebration of success. This work made an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are very good opportunities for extended writing, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Cross-curricular links are a strength. Presentation skills vary, but in Years 5 and 6 pupils write with a good cursive style and most present work neatly. Pupils are proud of their work in English.
57. Teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. It is good in Year 3, very good in Years 4 to 6 and excellent in the Year 5 class. Teachers provide good role models for pupils and value the contributions made by pupils in lessons. In the best teaching,

pupils are challenged well because teachers have high expectations and very secure subject knowledge. Expectations and challenge in Years 1 and 2 are not as high as they could be. Over-direction and missed opportunities for greater independence affect the amount of progress and achievement made in these classes. For older pupils in the school, independent learning is a real strength. Teaching assistants in Years 3 to 6 are effective in their roles and contribute well to pupils' learning. In Years 1 and 2, insufficient use is sometimes made of these staff in the first half of literacy lessons. When engaged with a group, they make a good contribution. Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers and each other, which helps them to learn successfully.

58. Behaviour management is very good throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well through very clear target-setting and very well-directed help. Gifted and talented pupils are clearly identified and in the best practice are challenged very well, but this is not always the case. Assessment of individual progress and standards is satisfactory. Pupils are increasingly involved in self-assessment in Years 3 to 6 and, as a result, have a good understanding of how they can improve. Whilst marking is positive, it is not yet linked effectively to target-setting in all classes. Monitoring of teaching and learning and the progress pupils make, is not rigorous enough. Despite this, the subject is led and managed well as the subject leader has clear plans for future developments. Satisfactory use is made of computers to support learning. The curriculum is very well enriched with theatre visits and visitors to school. The provision for English makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Overall, pupils use their literacy skills very well to support work in other subjects. Skills in speaking and listening are used extensively across the curriculum in support of questioning, discussions, presentations and collaborative group work. Plenary sessions are used well by many teachers to extend these skills. Pupils' ability to research, retrieve and collate information from a range of sources is used well, for example, in history and geography topics. Writing skills are used effectively in most subjects with good opportunities in most years for more extended writing.

Modern foreign languages - French

60. French was only sampled during the inspection and no overall judgements are therefore made. No lessons were able to be seen, but discussions were held with pupils and their work was analysed. French is taught to all Year 6 pupils by two experienced and enthusiastic teachers from the local high school, which is a languages college. The pupils' interest and enthusiasm is generated and they are looking forward to taking their language skills further when they join the high school, some being keen to try other languages such as Japanese. Pupils are learning a range of relevant phrases and vocabulary and are able to make a start at communicating in French, two girls having successfully tried out their skills in ordering drinks during an Easter holiday in France.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6 and pupils are achieving well.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge combines with good questioning to include all abilities.
- Marking and assessment of pupils' work shows limited reference to targets and how pupils can make the next steps to improve.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Use of ICT as a tool to support mathematical learning is limited.

Commentary

61. Standards in mathematics are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils are achieving well through the school. The quality of teaching is very good overall, with the best practice seen in the teaching of pupils in Years 4 to 6.
62. Since the previous inspection, there has been the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. In the more successful lessons, teachers question pupils of all abilities, asking them to explain their reasoning and they give pupils time to answer. This was seen in an excellent Year 4 lesson, where pupils were asked to search for patterns within number sequences and deduce what future patterns might be. The pupils were very well involved in this activity and came up with some very sophisticated patterns. Direct support for pupils with special educational needs by teaching assistants results in the best lessons being very inclusive and all pupils enjoy their mathematical experiences. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson, a group of less able pupils received focused support for their mathematics, with work in the ICT suite directed by a very effective teaching assistant. As a result, they achieved very well in this lesson.
63. All staff give a clear outline of the learning outcome for the lesson at the start of the session and explain to pupils what is expected of them, with the best teaching being geared to answer key questions outlined in teachers' planning. In an inspiring Year 5 lesson, which was an investigation into multiplication, all pupils were invigorated by their teacher's love and knowledge of the subject, which resulted in high levels of achievement by pupils of all levels of attainment.
64. Opportunities for pupils to show how their mathematical learning can be used in real life are few. Pupils are aware of general numeracy targets to be met; still to be developed are systems which assist pupils to understand what is needed to help them improve. Opportunities for investigational work are limited, with the majority of pupils' mathematical experiences being found in basic numeracy. Marking of work is regular but without suggestions for improvement and how to tackle the next steps. Pupils behave exceptionally well and show enthusiasm for the subject. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. However, the subject leader has not carried out sufficient monitoring and evaluation of standards in the subject and does not have a full overview of the subject through the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. Numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. It is evident in subjects such as ICT, where pupils use their mathematical knowledge to plot co-ordinates on graphs. In geography, pupils measure the water flow of a river and in history they use time lines to assess the era of Aztec civilisation. Pupils benefit from the use of measuring beat and rhythm in their musical activities. However, regular use of ICT to help pupils with mathematical investigations and to widen their mathematical experiences are limited.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils are achieving well through the school, although this achievement accelerates in Years 4 to 6.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Assessment does not give teachers or pupils the information that helps to increase pupils' rates of progress.
- There is some inadequacy in the teaching of investigative and experimental skills.

Commentary

66. The quality of teaching is good in most classes. However, it is very good in Years 4 to 6. This very good teaching is accelerating learning for pupils' last three years and is largely responsible for the well above average standards being reached by the end of Year 6. This is an improvement on standards being reached at the time of the previous inspection. Standards at the end of Year 2 remain as they were at the time of the previous inspection as above average.
67. Because of the generally good teaching, pupils are achieving well through the school. Although the school has adopted a scheme where much of the work is delivered through an investigative and experimental approach, there are variations in how this is applied. In some classes, there is plenty of activity, discussion and experiment, with pupils making exciting discoveries. For example, in Year 2, pupils were experimenting to complete circuits. After having completed a circuit and lit a bulb, they were given buzzers, which have one way polarity. After some initial disappointment when many buzzers would not work because groups had connected them up the wrong way round, there was general excitement when the buzzers were finally made to work. This led to some very interesting discussions on why they would only work one way and also some enthusiastic experimentation as pupils tried a variety of their own ideas, for example could they light a bulb and buzz at the same time. However, in other classes, too often the pupils are told exactly what to do or experiments are even done as a demonstration by the teacher, the pupils not being given the opportunity to learn for themselves.
68. Leadership and management in the subject are good. The subject leaders are comparatively new to their role and have sensibly carried out an audit of resources as a first stage, having first ensured that there was a curriculum in place which covered the needs of all pupils, particularly those in the mixed-age classes. Resources are now easily accessible and every teacher knows just what is available. The subject leaders recognise the need to work on assessment as there is at present no consistent system being used by all teachers. This means that teachers do not always know exactly what pupils have already learnt and are therefore not always making the best provision for them in their lessons. A further area for development is for the subject leaders to take more responsibility for monitoring standards. They do not monitor learning or pupils' work and have no consistent picture of standards through the school.
69. There is some useful enhancement to science in the school. For example, the pupils go on trips to a science museum. There are also some very useful links with two local secondary schools who provide enhancement for pupils who have a special talent for science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sound teaching enables pupils to make steady progress.
- Given the limited resources in the past, pupils achieve well in certain aspects.
- The resources are much improved but not used to their full potential.
- The range of applications is not consistently wide across the school.

Commentary

70. Pupils reach appropriate standards for their age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils achieve well, taking into account the limited resources in the past, in the skills of word-processing and research for other subjects. The Year 6 pupils' particular strengths lie in creating multimedia presentations and linking these with Internet sites, usually for research. In these areas they achieve well.
71. The resourcing has improved since the previous inspection in the quantity and quality of new hardware, and in the training of staff. The computers are now organised as a suite, creating a good resource for teaching full classes. The room is just big enough, but lacks temperature control to prevent the heat building up to unacceptable levels in summer months. Some classrooms have stand-alone computers and others share banks of laptops. These were not often observed in use during the inspection, but pupils report that they are used regularly during literacy and numeracy lessons.
72. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Whilst confidence and expertise in using the computer suite is often good, this is not consistent across the whole school, so the rate of progress in lessons varies from satisfactory to good. Teachers plan well, however, and provide clear and relevant learning objectives. The planning scheme itself is well-structured to guide the logical progression of skills. Much of the planning involves content that is relevant to learning in other subjects. Not only do pupils get hands-on experience of keyboard skills and processes, they also absorb content learning for use in other areas. For instance, as Years 3 and 4 learnt to load and operate the 'duck game' program, they also learnt to manipulate number variables and to spot patterns and relationships. Staff support pupils who have special educational needs well throughout the school, enabling them to make good progress also. Year 6 lower attaining pupils were well motivated by using computers to record their autobiographies and were proud of the neat printed outcomes.
73. Subject leadership and management has changed hands recently, and is satisfactory overall, having brought the provision up to a quality found in most schools. The subject leader's action plan is clear and achievable, including the development of assessment into a more rigorous form to track progress more closely, and to build on the pupils' useful self-evaluation system to incorporate targets. The computer suite has become the main focus of teaching, so that the use of computers as a regular classroom learning aid has fallen away. This inhibits pupils' developing independence, as they do not have the option to quickly check or produce something by computer.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. Teachers use a wider range of opportunities than in the previous inspection, to enable pupils to apply their ICT skills in other subjects. For instance, Year 6 pupils use the Internet to find history facts, and Year 5 geography presentations contain accurate accounts of the geographical aspects of their river field trip, and link well with maths in collating the data about water flow. Overall, curriculum opportunities are not planned systematically into a coherent whole, and there are gaps, for instance in science, design and technology and the mathematics of spreadsheets.

HUMANITIES

None of these subjects was a focus for inspection and little direct evidence was available. Therefore, no overall judgements on provision can be made.

Geography

75. This subject has a high profile in the school's curriculum and pupils enjoy a good range of worthwhile experiences. A scrutiny of work and lesson observations indicate standards are average by the end of Year 6. Achievement is satisfactory. However, in Year 5, standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is excellent. Very good cross-curricular links help pupils to acquire a good geographical vocabulary. Such links deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding and develop high level skills. In an excellent lesson in Year 5, pupils visited a local stream, measured its velocity at different points using a mathematical formula, learnt about meanders, undercurrents, erosion and deposition, extending their technical vocabulary very well. Back in the classroom they used videos, music and a CD-ROM as they explored different rivers from source to sea. Parental support contributed very well to pupils' learning both on the visit and in the classroom. Pupils completed individual projects at home with excellent support from parents and sometimes grandparents. They worked in groups to produce high quality poems, based on this work, which they then presented to the class. Achievement in these lessons was excellent as a result of inspirational teaching. The role of the subject leader has not been sufficiently developed to ensure rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The planned programme for pupils in mixed year groups is not yet securely embedded to ensure all pupils have access to the same skills and opportunities. Marking of pupils work is inconsistent. The best practice provides constructive help to enable pupils to improve.

History

76. No lessons were observed but planning and a scrutiny of work indicate that a satisfactory curriculum is in place, enriched very effectively by visits and visitors to school. A scrutiny of work indicates average standards and satisfactory achievement overall. Pupils enjoy a broad range of worthwhile experiences in history. It is often the basis for literacy work, such as letter writing to Cardinal Wolsey from Henry VIII in Year 5 and posters of a Roman battle in Year 4. Pupils find out about the past using a wide range of primary and secondary sources. There is good attention given to research and developing skills in historical enquiry in Years 3 to 6, with good opportunities for extended writing in these classes. Good cross-curricular links with literacy, art and design and other subjects enhance learning opportunities well. The subject is soundly led and managed but monitoring of learning and standards is not sufficiently developed. The planned programme for pupils in mixed year groups is not yet securely embedded to ensure all pupils have access to the same skills and opportunities. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. In the best practice, pupils know what they have to do to improve their work.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Little direct teaching and learning was observed and none of these subjects was a focus for inspection. No overall judgements on provision have therefore been made.

Art and design

77. No lessons were observed, but from evidence of pupils' work, displayed very effectively throughout the school, there are indications that standards are average. Examples of art and design across the curriculum are evident in work on a whole-school theme on South America. Year 1 pupils made and painted Mexican plates and designed blanket patterns. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have painted stylised animal prints that link with Inca legends. Year 3 and 4 pupils have made Colombian appliqué designs and Year 6 pupils have decorated their entrance hall with very effective Guatemalan kites. Pupils' work is displayed around school and in classes with care and respect.

Design and technology

78. A study of planning, the display of pupils' work and discussion with Year 6 pupils indicates that curricular provision is satisfactory. The school's timetabling has been adjusted to ensure that the subject receives adequate time and attention, with a two year cycle of planning to take account of the mixed age classes. Many of the topics form useful links with other subjects, for instance the Year 6 electric 'bug kits' link with forces and motion in science. The topics often include numeracy and literacy effectively. For instance, the Year 3 and 4 books with moving pictures link with the study of illustration in literature, and the Year 6 slipper project contains some good mathematical recording of consumer surveys. The provision is monitored satisfactorily by the subject leader, who has drawn up an accurate evaluation for inclusion in the school improvement plan. This highlights appropriate areas for attention, such as an increasing focus by staff on the pupils' use of computer design and involvement in assessing standards and progress.

Music

79. Two lessons were observed and in these the teaching was very good. This results from detailed planning, good use of the school's musical resources and teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. From this, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, thoroughly enjoy their work and perform with some talent. The school also provides a wide variety of tuition that is open to all. Lunchtime recorder groups thrive and within school time, specialist tuition is given to pupils on a wide variety of instruments including violin, cello, clarinet, guitar and flute. Music, and particularly singing, is a major feature of school annual productions and religious festivals, which contribute to the school's very positive attitudes to the study and enjoyment of music in all its forms. This results in a great many pupils being confident to participate in the school's many musical activities.

Physical education

80. Effective planning shows that all areas of physical education are covered well. Pupils enjoy a wide range of worthwhile experiences. The many out-of-school activities greatly enrich the school's provision in this subject. All pupils are taught swimming and by the time they leave the school most pupils can swim at least 25 metres. Pupils participate in a wide range of sporting activities including football, netball, cricket, athletics and cross-country running. Teams regularly enjoy success when competing with other schools. This is apparent in the vast display of trophies and shields in the entrance hall, indicating better than average standards. In 2 of the 3 lessons seen in Years 4 to 6, standards were above average. Teaching and learning were good and pupils achieved well in all three lessons. Very good attitudes to learning and high standards of behaviour were consistent in these lessons. Good practice was observed in the attention to safety and high expectations of the teachers. The leadership and management of physical education is good. Resources are good overall with the exception of mats for gymnastics, which are worn.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good, although pupils achieve very well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

Commentary

81. Pupils' personal development is a high priority for the school. Many informal opportunities are taken to improve their achievement in personal, social and health education and citizenship.

This is the major reason why pupils' achievement is better than the quality of teaching in this area. The subject leader, who has recently returned from maternity leave, is leading the subject very well, has very good knowledge of the requirements and has clear plans for future developments. For example, although sex and relationships education is carried out, this is only for the oldest pupils and the subject leader sees the need to increase this provision for other pupils. Citizenship is recognised as another area for development. There is a school council, which helps in this aspect, and Year 6 visit a Magistrate's court occasionally, but the subject leader has plans to organise a fuller programme of citizenship education. Awareness about drugs, alcohol and substance abuse is created well, with a clear programme of lessons and visitors such as 'Crucial Crew' and the 'Life Education Caravan' adding to this provision. All this represents good progress since the previous inspection.

82. Teaching in the lessons seen was good. There is a clear plan covering all the major elements of the subject, which teachers are using well to plan their lessons. Good resources are available, such as videos pitched at the pupils' level, on such things as risks they might encounter and making choices. This video sparked off a very good discussion on peer pressure in the Year 3 lesson, with good questioning by the teacher. A lesson on substance abuse in Year 5, linked well to the pupils current science work on healthy lifestyles, showed good progress through the lesson as pupils became much more aware of the range of drugs and their dangers. Good discussion, in pairs and as a class, addressed such substances as coffee and beer and the need to use them in moderation, as well as more dangerous drugs such as heroin, cocaine and marijuana. The legal situation regarding these was also discussed, although the teacher was somewhat economic with all the legal aspects, giving a less moderate view on the law relating to alcohol for example, than is actually the case. The good provision in this subject is enhanced significantly by the very good ethos of the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
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	2
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	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
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	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).