

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRCHLEY ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Billinge, Wigan

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104813

Headteacher: Mr John W Leake

Lead inspector: Mr Colin Henderson

Dates of inspection: 15th – 17th March 2004

Inspection number: 255508

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Primary
School category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 4 – 11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 207

School address: Birchley Road
Billinge
Wigan
Lancashire
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Telephone number: 01744 678610
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Reverend Fr Bernard Jackson

Date of previous inspection: June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Birchley St Mary's is an average-sized Catholic primary school that is located in the village of Billinge to the north of St Helens. It is a popular, over-subscribed school that serves a mixed, relatively well-favoured local community. Almost all pupils are of white United Kingdom ethnic background. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Eight per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is below the national average. They have a broad range of educational, social and communication needs. Attainment on entry varies from year to year, although is average overall. The school has gained wide local and national recognition for its high attainment, for example, being awarded Beacon status, Early Years Kitemark, Artsmark and ICT in Practice Award. The school provides a broad programme of before and after school clubs and activities.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23742	Mr Colin Henderson	Lead inspector	Mathematics
			Information and communication technology
			Geography
			Physical education
			English as an additional language
9652	Mr Colin Herbert	Lay inspector	
23375	Mr John Hicks	Team inspector	English
			History
			Special educational needs
24031	Mrs Iris Idle	Team inspector	Science
			Art and design
			Design and technology
			Music
			Foundation Stage

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	8
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	12
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS	15
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Birchley St Mary's Catholic Primary School is an excellent school. It is a very caring, harmonious and supportive school community in which every child feels valued and is encouraged and expected to achieve very well. The charismatic leadership of the headteacher is excellent and he gives a clear direction to the work of the school. He is supported very well by a very strong team approach. The consistently high quality of teaching enables pupils to achieve and maintain well above average standards. Pupils clearly enjoy school and their behaviour is excellent. The school gives excellent value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils attain well above average standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher and the very strong staff team work very successfully together to provide consistently very good teaching.
- The school provides a very good, innovative curriculum that is enriched through an excellent range of sporting, musical and artistic activities.
- Provision for ICT is excellent and resources are used very successfully to extend pupils' learning.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent.
- The care, guidance and support for pupils' personal and academic development are excellent and reflect the school's positive and caring ethos.
- Links with parents and the local community are excellent.

The school has no significant weaknesses.

The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection. It has achieved Beacon School status, especially for its work in ICT and its leadership and management. Provision for ICT is now excellent and the school is widely recognised, both locally and nationally, for the quality of its work. Subject leadership and management are now very good and focused consistently on improving standards. Standards of attainment are now well above the national average. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour remain at a very high level.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - top 5 per cent nationally; 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' achievement is very good throughout the school. The pupils attain standards that are well above average, especially in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Children enter the school with average attainment. They make very good progress in the Foundation Stage, promoted by very good teaching. They achieve the nationally expected levels by the end of the reception year. Many exceed these levels, especially in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make very good progress overall. Very good teaching and an innovative and challenging curriculum encourage all pupils to participate fully and achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from excellent

support and guidance and make very good progress towards their learning targets. Consistently high quality teaching and very effective use of high quality resources enable pupils to attain well above nationally expected standards in art and design and music.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent and promote excellent attitudes and behaviour. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching is consistently very good throughout the school and helps pupils make very good progress in their learning. The curriculum is very good for children in the Foundation Stage and for infant and junior pupils. It is enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The school provides excellent care, guidance and support for pupils, which reflect its caring Catholic ethos. Links with parents and the local community are excellent and contribute significantly to pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The charismatic, influential leadership of the headteacher is a key factor in the school's effectiveness. He is supported very well by an excellent staff team who share his vision for a high achieving and harmonious school community. The management is very good. Co-ordinators manage their subjects very well and focus consistently on raising and maintaining high standards. Governance is excellent. Governors are fully involved in working with the headteacher and his staff to review the school's effectiveness and target improvement. They fulfil their statutory requirements fully and make a significant contribution to shaping the direction of the school's work.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of the school. Parents in over 95 per cent of the questionnaires responded positively to every question. All parents agreed that the staff expected their children to work hard; that the school was well led and managed; their children had appropriate homework; there was a good range of learning activities and the arrangements to enable their child settle well into school are good. Inspectors agreed with the parents' very positive views.

Pupils have similar positive views of the school. These were clearly reflected in the pupils' questionnaires and in discussions with inspectors. Almost all pupils indicated that they enjoyed school; they have to work hard; teachers show them how to work harder; other children are friendly and they know an adult to go to if they are worried. Inspectors agree that this is a friendly, caring school in which relationships are excellent.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school has no significant weaknesses. Pupils' writing skills are not always extended successfully in history and geography, although they are applied well in other subjects to attain above and often well above average standards.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are well above average throughout the school. They are very high in ICT. Children achieve very well in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain high standards throughout the school, especially in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- Children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress in the different areas of learning.
- Very good teaching and an innovative and challenging curriculum help pupils to achieve very well in many subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs benefit from excellent support and guidance and achieve very well.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.4 (17.8)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	17.3 (16.0)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	18.4 (17.8)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 28 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.3 (29.4)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	29.1 (28.9)	26.8 (26.7)
science	32.8 (29.9)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1 The results of the national tests for pupils in Year 6 over the last three years show that standards have remained consistently well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. They are above the average for similar schools. In 2003, the results in science were in the top five per cent compared nationally and with similar schools. The results of the tests for pupils in Year 2 show a similar pattern of well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence reflects these test results. Pupils attain higher standards than those reported at the last inspection. The school exceeded its very challenging targets in the 2003 tests of 90 per cent in English and 94 per cent in mathematics for the proportion of Year 6 pupils to achieve the nationally expected Level 4. The proportion of pupils who attained Level 5 was also well above the national average. Inspectors found that the school is likely to exceed its challenging target of 91 per cent in 2004.

2 Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage varies from year to year, although it is average overall. Children settle happily into school life and make very good progress in their learning because of the very good teaching they receive. The very good partnership between teachers and

teaching assistants allows each child to be closely supported and their progress frequently assessed. Teachers plan work in detail to match children's needs. All children meet the levels expected nationally for their age by the end of the reception year. Most exceed the levels, especially in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development.

3 Pupils continue to achieve very well throughout the school. The quality of teaching is very good and teachers have consistently high expectations. They use interesting methods that promote an enthusiasm for learning. Pupils work hard and achieve very well. More able pupils and those identified as gifted and talented, for example, in mathematics, are challenged very successfully to attain high standards. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress towards the targets in their very good individual education plans because of the warm, inclusive atmosphere in the school and the excellent support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. These pupils frequently achieve average standards in national tests.

4 The school provides a rich and innovative curriculum that stimulates pupils' learning. The pupils achieve very well, especially in ICT, where standards are very high compared to those expected nationally. The school's very strong focus on improving its provision and the quality of teaching and learning in ICT since the last inspection has resulted in a huge improvement in pupils' attainment. Pupils attain well above nationally expected levels in art and design and music, promoted by very good teaching and high quality resources. Standards in physical education and geography are above nationally expected levels.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are excellent as a result of the excellent provision for spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The willingness of pupils to take responsibility to help others.
- Confident and very well behaved young people with excellent attitudes.
- Pupils' levels of attendance and their punctuality remain very good.
- Pupils have excellent relationships with adults and with each other.
- The excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development promotes a very caring and supportive Catholic ethos.

Commentary

5 The school has very high expectations of all its pupils and pupils respond enthusiastically and clearly enjoy being in school. The older pupils willingly accept a range of responsibilities. These include being members of the school council, prefects, infant monitors and playground buddies. They take their roles seriously and perform them very conscientiously. In the playground, they play very well together. They are polite to all adults and very willing to involve others in their games. In lessons, behaviour is very good and pupils are eager to learn. Pupils' behaviour and their enthusiastic attitudes have been maintained at the high standards reported at the last inspection, although, during the inspection, the behaviour in one infant class did not reach the consistently excellent level seen in the rest of the school.

6 Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent overall and pupils have excellent relationships with each other. These very strong relationships are the result of the very strong ethos that permeates the whole of school life. The school has excellent procedures to deal with any forms of harassment. These result in pupils being free from bullying and being happy and confident around school. There have been no exclusions of pupils in the last school year. The impact of these very high quality relationships is that all pupils are totally included in all school activities and encouraged to try to improve their work.

7 The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The Catholic faith underpins everything pupils do in this school. They show care for those less fortunate than themselves when they contribute to a Romanian orphanage and a wide range of other charities. They reflect on major incidents happening in the wider world and also think about pupils and parents who are ill. They develop a good awareness of other faiths and how aspects of them compare with Christianity. Very good opportunities are provided for social development through activities such as circle time¹, school council, performances in school and involvement with village activities. The excellent range of music and art opportunities available to all pupils develops a strong awareness of their own culture and those of others.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	175	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	30	0	0

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

Attendance

8 Parents give excellent support to the school and this is clearly demonstrated by the very good level of pupils' attendance and punctuality. Attendance has remained at the well above average levels reported at the last inspection.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (95.8%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.2	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

9 The quality of education is very good overall. Teaching is very good. The school provides a very good curriculum, enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. The school provides excellent care, guidance and support for its pupils. Links with parents and the community are excellent.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good. The very good procedures to assess pupils' work are used very well by teachers to inform their teaching and help pupils understand how they can improve their standards of attainment.

¹ During circle time, pupils discuss a wide range of personal and general issues. It is agreed by all pupils that no interruptions should occur and only one person will speak. Respect for other pupils' views will occur at all times.

Teaching is very good throughout the school. It is often excellent. It is a significant factor in helping children in the Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 to 6 to achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour that they strive hard to achieve.
- Teachers work in an excellent partnership with classroom assistants to ensure that all pupils are included fully and are given excellent support and guidance in their learning.
- Teachers make excellent use of information on how well pupils are doing to plan work that challenges pupils of different abilities very effectively.
- Teachers make very good use of resources to provide innovative teaching methods that stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 28 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	13	7	2	0	0	0

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

10 Lesson observations and an analysis of pupils' work show that teaching is very good and often excellent. This reflects the positive views of almost all parents and pupils. Parents in 99 per cent of questionnaires valued the good quality of teaching. Many pupils, in their questionnaires and in discussions with inspectors, said that they found lessons interesting and fun and that teachers helped them improve their work. Teaching has been maintained at the very good standard reported at the last inspection. The consistently high quality of teaching enables children to make very good progress towards the levels expected at the end of the Foundation Stage. It helps pupils to continue to achieve very well in Years 1 to 6.

11 Teachers have high expectations of pupils' attitudes and achievements. They make very good use of high quality assessment procedures to plan in great detail and set work to challenge and extend pupils of different abilities. They make it clear to pupils what they are trying to achieve and regularly remind pupils of what they expect from them by the end of the lesson. This results in pupils sustaining their interest and concentration. Pupils have excellent relationships with their teachers. They are very keen to work for them and achieve as well as they can. During the inspection, there were many excellent examples of teachers working as a team with other teachers and well trained classroom assistants. Their interaction, often humorous, stimulated pupils' enjoyment of learning. For example, in a very interesting Year 1 numeracy lesson, the excellent 'double-act' of two teachers working together grasped pupils' attention. Their lively and humorous verbal exchanges allowed them to use questions excellently to involve all pupils and extend their knowledge and understanding of addition. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are supported excellently. They are included fully in all aspects of the work and, with encouragement and guidance, many achieve standards similar to those expected for their age. Teachers maintain detailed records on how well pupils are achieving. They use these excellent tracking procedures to identify different groups of pupils, for example, more able pupils and those who are gifted and talented. They plan activities that extend these pupils' learning and help them to achieve very high standards, for example, in mathematics.

12 The school's focus on improving ICT resources since the last inspection has helped teachers broaden their range of teaching methods. They use their laptop computers to prepare

lessons that immediately grasp pupils' interest and involve them very effectively in their learning. For example, the use of graphics and inter-active whiteboards in the introductions to lessons encourage pupils to be actively involved and to sustain their concentration. Many pupils commented that the teachers' use of ICT makes lessons interesting and enjoyable. Teachers use the resources very well to demonstrate particular features or learning strategies and to maintain a brisk pace to lessons. In some lessons, the teacher was particularly effective in using different parts of the whiteboard to provide challenging tasks for different groups of pupils, for example, when extending pupils' mental mathematical skills. Teachers make very good use of links with the local community to enrich and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, Year 6 pupils were fascinated when three paratroopers, in full uniform, came into school with some authentic World War II equipment. They listened very attentively and used their very good literacy skills to make detailed notes. The teacher had prepared the pupils very well and they asked some searching questions about a soldier's wartime life. The opportunity to hear first hand accounts and to handle some of the equipment provided a very valuable learning experience and extended pupils' knowledge and understanding considerably.

13 Teachers mark pupils' work consistently and use constructive comments very successfully to identify what they have done well and what needs improvement. Pupils are required to initial their books when they have read the comments and teachers then check later to see if their guidance has been acted upon. The support and help results in improvements in pupils' confidence and the standard of their work.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good for children in the Foundation Stage and for pupils in Years 1 to 6. It is substantially enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. The accommodation is very good. The range and quality of resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The innovative curriculum provides a very good range of learning activities to enable all pupils to be included fully and achieve very well.
- An excellent range of extra-curricular activities are very well supported and enrich the curriculum considerably.
- The school fosters a high level of pupil inclusion to help all pupils to be actively involved and extend their learning.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent and meets fully their learning needs.

Commentary

14 The school provides a very good curriculum, packed with innovation and very much enriched by an excellent range of additional activities, including French for pupils in Years 5 and 6. It has improved considerably since the last inspection especially in the ICT curriculum. After-school clubs, exciting and stimulating visits and input from experts on a wide range of topics enliven the curriculum. The Foundation Stage curriculum is planned in very good detail. Teaching staff use information very effectively on how well children are doing to match activities to their learning needs in all the required areas of learning. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and has modified important elements, such as the National Literacy Strategy, to match the needs of different groups of pupils in the school. Teachers plan the curriculum very well to ensure that all pupils are included fully in a very good range of activities and to ensure that they make very good progress in their learning. Teachers use the very good resources to go to great lengths to make their lessons purposeful, stimulating and interesting. They are particularly good at using ICT to add zest and a variety of approaches to seemingly ordinary topics. The school realises the great importance of first-hand experience and gives all pupils a very good range of opportunities to visit local points of information and interest. Additionally, visitors such as artists, poets, theatre groups and members of the local community add enrichment and depth to

pupils' studies. The school makes very good use of homework to enhance the curriculum and develop learning. This is very well supported by parents who clearly value the opportunity to contribute more to the education of their children.

15 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent and is valued highly by the pupils and their parents. The school works closely with the nursery school to identify pupils with special educational needs, including the gifted and talented, at a very early age. Thereafter, their specific learning needs are carefully addressed and progress is thoroughly tracked. When necessary, high quality individual education plans are agreed between home, school and the relevant outside agencies. Discussions with pupils' show that they have a good understanding of what their targets are and they value greatly the support and help they get in trying to achieve them. Very good teaching focused closely on learning targets accelerates the rate of pupils' progress. As a result, pupils achieve very well and most reach standards attained by average pupils nationally. Excellent teamwork between teachers and classroom assistants ensures a high level of inclusive education for pupils of lower ability.

Care, guidance and support

The school's provision for pupil's care, welfare, health and safety is excellent. The school provides excellent support, advice and guidance, both on pupils' achievements and their personal development. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to be involved in all aspects of school life as the school seeks, values and acts upon their views

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality care promotes a supportive ethos and reflects the excellent relationships throughout the school.
- The excellent support, advice and guidance contribute significantly to helping pupils to enjoy school and improve the quality of their work.
- The staff provide a wide range of opportunities to encourage pupils to contribute their views and help the school to improve.

Commentary

16 The great success of the school's care arrangements lies in its determination to promote an atmosphere of continuing security and well being where all pupils feel safe and valued throughout the school day. This is very clearly underpinned by the strong Catholic ethos in the school and reflected by the very good provision at the breakfast and after school clubs. Discussion with parents shows that they fully appreciate "the wonderful care" their children receive. Parents in 98 per cent of the questionnaires agreed that staff cared for their children and treated them fairly. A pupils' questionnaire showed that some pupils were feeling threatened by the ease of access to the playground. The school dealt with this very quickly. Pupils were fully involved and now comment about how safe they feel during their time in school. The procedures for every aspect of health, safety and guidance are excellent and all staff are fully aware of these. The quality of these procedures remains at the high level reported at the last inspection.

17 There is an excellent level of provision for the support, advice and guidance for all pupils. This is based on the very good knowledge that all adults have of pupils and the very high quality of trusting relationships that exist between children and adults within the school community. Pupils know that the school will listen to their concerns. The well-established school council and weekly opportunities for all pupils to be involved in circle time enable them to share their ideas and concerns. Their suggestions are used very well to significantly improve outdoor play. Tubs of equipment have been provided to make playtime more purposeful and a "peaceful place" has been established for those who wish to be quiet. The support and guidance given to all pupils in promoting their academic development are excellent. The school maintains excellent procedures to track pupils' achievements and to identify areas for improvement. Teachers use these procedures very effectively to help pupils improve their work.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school continues to have excellent links with parents and the local community. Links with other schools are very good so that pupils make the transfer to secondary education very effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides an excellent range of high quality information about pupils' standards and progress.
- The excellent home-school links have a significant impact on pupils' progress and standards.
- Excellent links with the local community extend the range of learning activities.
- Mechanisms for the transfer of pupils are very good and they are very well prepared when they change schools.

Commentary

18 This remains an outstanding feature of the school and has improved on the very good standards reported at the time of the last inspection. The school continues to provide very high quality information to parents so they are very well informed about the progress and standards reached by their children. Annual reports are clear, informative and comprehensive so that parents and pupils understand how well they are achieving. Reports also include an evaluation of pupils' attitudes so parents are aware how much effort their children are making. In all classes, teachers use the school's very good assessment system to set clear individual pupil targets for English and mathematics. These are shared with pupils and their parents and help to improve learning, although they are not always used consistently in each class to inform pupils about progress towards their targets.

19 The school values highly the important role of parents in actively helping their children to learn. This is reflected clearly in the excellent provision for pupils with special educational needs. Parents are given very good advice about how to help their children most productively at home. They are fully involved in setting goals for future learning and reviewing progress. This excellent home-school link has a very significant impact on the standards attained by all pupils. The school has an excellent web site containing a wealth of information that parents and others can access. This is regularly updated so that web site visitors can enjoy images portraying the rich life of the school as it unfolds. Parents have a justifiably high opinion of the school. This is demonstrated by the very effective parent teachers association that contributes so much to the life of the school. In addition to raising large sums of money for projects like refurbishing the school library, the association runs many other well-supported social events.

20 Links with the local community are excellent and are used very effectively to contribute to the broad range of activities. For example, the excellent links with the nearby church provide many opportunities to extend pupils' personal development. Very good links exist with local secondary schools. This helps pupils in Year 6 to make a smooth and trouble-free transition to the next stage of education for which they are already extremely well prepared.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The leadership of the headteacher and the governance of the school are excellent. The leadership and management of key staff are very good. The school has made excellent use of its status as a Beacon School to maintain high standards of leadership and management.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership, focused strongly on maintaining very high standards.
- The headteacher, staff and governors have an excellent team approach that encourages all staff to contribute to school improvement.
- They have established a very supportive and caring ethos in which every pupil is valued and included fully in all aspects of the school's programme.
- Governors work in an excellent, influential partnership with the headteacher and his staff to monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided by the school and to shape the direction of its work.
- The leadership and management of subjects are very good overall and target areas for improvement very effectively.

Commentary

21 The headteacher continues to provide excellent leadership and a very positive direction to the work of the school, as reported in the last inspection. He has an excellent knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and has established an excellent staff team who share his vision for a high achieving and harmonious school community. His charismatic, personal style enables him to manage his staff very effectively. He encourages and enables them to extend their professional skills and knowledge continuously and contribute their ideas to achieving even higher standards. His clear vision, his encouragement and support of his staff and the impact on standards are illustrated very effectively in the dramatic improvement made in the two key issues arising from the last inspection. The headteacher worked very successfully with the ICT co-ordinator to help the school attain Beacon status for its work in ICT and its leadership and management. He has made excellent use of funds arising from this achievement to extend the role of subject co-ordinators, the other key issue. All co-ordinators are given responsibility and opportunities to monitor and evaluate standards of teaching and learning in their subjects very well. The headteacher has successfully managed staff changes by encouraging teachers to take on subject responsibilities, often with the support of an experienced colleague. This has established a continual, sharp focus on school improvement. Subject co-ordinators contribute detailed subject action plans to establish a comprehensive school improvement plan that provides a clear direction to the school's work. The excellent, influential leadership of the headteacher is a key factor in the school's success. He leads by example as reflected in his excellent leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs. His leadership is valued highly by parents, 100 per cent of the questionnaires felt that the school was well led and managed.

22 Governors are very supportive of the school and work excellently with the headteacher and his staff to maintain a high quality of education. They fulfil their statutory requirements fully. For example, they ensure that their policy for racial harmony is monitored and evaluated closely to reflect the school's caring Catholic ethos. Governors review the school's effectiveness excellently and set out clear targets for improvement. For example, governors attend review meetings for pupils with special educational needs and meet with the assessment co-ordinator and the local education authority's advisor to agree challenging attainment targets for the school. Governors attend staff meetings and conferences to make influential contributions when agreeing the school's mission statement and its improvement priorities. These result in a strong, shared team approach that guides the work of the school, ensures all pupils are included fully and underpins pupils' positive attitudes, behaviour and the excellent relationships.

23 The school has established excellent procedures for monitoring staff and pupil performance. The assessment co-ordinator has established a very comprehensive range of information to track how well pupils are doing. Teachers use this very effectively to set end of year attainment targets for each year group. Governors are kept informed fully about these targets and work very closely with staff to evaluate regularly the progress being made. They make well-informed decisions about using resources efficiently to promote standards, for example, when providing additional teaching support for pupils taking national tests. Governors use their financial knowledge and understanding excellently to ensure that funds are used fully on maintaining a very good quality of education and high standards. The headteacher actively seeks sources of additional funding to

supplement the school's budget and allow the school to maintain staffing levels. He works closely with the governors and the school's efficient administrator to maintain detailed up-to-date financial records. They use the principles of best value consistently to evaluate the school's effectiveness. Governors ensure that funds are used to promote the education of the pupils currently in the school so there is very little surplus at the end of each financial year. They use a very good range of information on how well pupils are achieving to compare their performance in different year groups and with other schools. They make very good use of consulting with staff, parents and pupils to evaluate the school's provision and to identify and target priorities for improvement.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	553,522
Total expenditure	553,789
Expenditure per pupil	2,599.95

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	- 4685
Balance carried forward to the next	393

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

24 Children enter the reception class with standards that are in line with those expected for their age. Their speaking and listening skills are good but their writing skills are underdeveloped as many have difficulty holding pencils properly. Their personal, social and emotional skills are good. Children settle very well because staff provide a secure and exciting learning environment and children form very good relationships with all adults. Improvements to the accommodation for children in the Foundation Stage have improved the range and quality of learning activities.

25 Teaching is very good and has been maintained at the standard reported at the last inspection. Planning is very thorough and is matched very closely to the standards expected nationally for children of this age. The assessment of children's achievements is very good and links very closely to planning. This, together with detailed day-to-day assessment, is recorded in detail in the Foundation Stage records. The thoroughness of this process guides teaching very effectively and helps children to achieve very well. Very good relationships are developed with parents through a meeting and visits to the reception class prior to children starting the Foundation Stage.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

26 There was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on provision and teaching in this area of learning.

27 In the only lesson seen, children showed good physical skills. They found their own space well in the hall. They thought carefully about how a caterpillar moves and created appropriate movements from being the egg to emerging as a caterpillar and finding food. The teaching in this lesson was good overall, although children sat for long periods of time and did not fully extend their physical skills. Children use small apparatus daily when they play outdoors. They find it hard to throw and catch small balls and their hand/eye co-ordination is underdeveloped. There is limited space for this activity between the wall and the garden and children spend most of the time collecting their balls from the garden. Evidence on a compact disc shows that children have a satisfactory range of opportunities to develop their balancing skills. They move in different ways on benches when they work on apparatus in the hall, although this was not seen during the inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships promote high standards of behaviour.
- Children show a high level of independence and confidence when discussing in pairs and talking to visitors.
- All children listen very carefully.
- The opportunities to contribute their ideas in circle time are insufficient.

Commentary

28 Very good teaching helps children to make very good progress in this area of learning. They demonstrate very good behaviour when they listen to their teacher for extended periods of time. They take turns to answer questions and listen very well to the answers of others. They move round the reception class in a mature manner, selecting activities and working with a high degree of independence. Children understand and respond very well to the high expectations of their teacher. The very good relationships they have help them to behave and achieve very well. Most exceed the standard expected nationally by the end of the reception year.

29 Good opportunities are planned for children to work with “talking partners”. They do this without fuss and hold a very sensible and quiet discussion. They demonstrate a high level of care for each other and for living things. The opportunities for children to contribute and discuss their ideas in circle time are limited by the large size of the group. This does not always encourage their self-confidence.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **very good**

Main strength and weaknesses

- Very good teaching helps children to develop their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills very well.
- The opportunities to develop children’s questioning skills are very good.
- Children sit on the carpet too long at the start of some lessons.
- More able children need further challenge in their reading at home.

Commentary

30 The very good teaching and planning help children to extend their literacy skills in all the work they do. Most achieve very well and exceed the standard expected nationally by the end of the reception year. Good conversations are overheard when children book holiday tickets in the “travel shop” and when they share their ideas with each other both in pairs and larger groups. A large majority speak and listen very well. The teacher holds their attention very well when they share “The Hungry Caterpillar” story together. They sit spellbound and show awe and wonder as the page is turned and they find an egg on a leaf. They cannot believe that the caterpillar has eaten so many things. This work is linked very well to their work on mini-beasts. Children are interested to talk about events at home with their talking partners and are developing good questioning skills. In their writing, they understand the need for capital letters and full stops, including spaces between their words. Their diaries show that they have a good understanding of letter shapes and sounds and children use these well to help them read and write.

31 All children enjoy books. They know where to look for the author and that he or she writes the words. They know the difference between print and pictures and the majority are reading simple sentences that include familiar words well. In one lesson, children sat for a considerable time before becoming involved in activities. Although they were very well behaved and listened well, the use of this time did not always ensure that children were involved fully in practical work. More able children are challenged well during guided reading sessions, although they are not given sufficiently challenging reading material to extend their reading skills at home.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and develops children’s mathematical skills and knowledge very well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants take every opportunity to reinforce and extend mathematical understanding.
- There is a good variety of mathematical activities.

Commentary

32 Most children are on course to exceed the nationally expected level in this area of learning. The very good teaching and detailed planning to match tasks to different learning needs allow all children to make very good progress. The large majority of children identify numbers correctly and

write these with a good degree of accuracy. They demonstrate a sound knowledge of doubles, for example, knowing that the caterpillar's ten separate legs make five pairs of legs. Teachers use every opportunity to encourage children to use their mathematical skills well, for example, when using the outside number line to count to 12. Plenty of practical activities support children's mathematical development. For example, they further develop their understanding of shapes by using these to create house pictures and trains. An analysis of work shows that the more able children have a good understanding of money and simple money problems. In the computer suite, they begin to develop their understanding of the properties of shapes successfully. Children show a very good understanding of computers and use these every day to extend and reinforce many aspects of their number work.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good first hand opportunities provided for children to extend their knowledge and understanding, especially their early scientific learning.
- Very good teaching extends children's skills, knowledge and understanding well.

Commentary

33 Children make very good progress in this area of learning. All achieve the standard expected of them by the end of reception year. Many are likely to exceed this level. Children show a great interest in living creatures and really enjoy finding worms in the special wormery loaned to them by the local council. They show care when taking them from the teacher's hand and putting them into special containers. Many know that they are "special worms" and not like the ones found in the garden. Very good teaching helps them to link the story of "The Hungry Caterpillar" in literacy to their work about caterpillars very effectively. Children watch the chrysalis in their classroom carefully to see signs of it changing into a butterfly. Their work in literacy and mathematics supports this work very well. Teaching staff carefully select activities in outdoor play to help children to develop early scientific skills of investigation. For example, they pour water through pipes of different diameters and at different heights to watch the different rates of flow of the water. A range of construction materials also helps them to develop understanding of the wider world when they create models and moving vehicles. Children use computers very well, demonstrating very good mouse control and their skills are at a high level for their age.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision for creative development is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children use a wide range of materials and techniques to promote their learning.
- Children are confident when cutting, fixing and making models.
- Very good teaching and planning enable pupils to quickly develop their creative skills.

Commentary

34 Children achieve the standard expected of them by the end of the reception class. Many are likely to exceed this level. Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities to explore different paints, inks, crayons and pliable materials. For example, they blow inks using straws to create good autumn trees and look carefully at leaves as they paint them using autumn colours. During the inspection, very good teaching helped children to extend their skills when linking fluffy circles together carefully to create the very hungry caterpillar. Displays show that they make rockets and add foil, tissue paper and glitter to make very realistic models. These are well linked to a school project on

space. Children use computers very well to create symmetrical patterns and they then paint these patterns accurately. They have many opportunities to use musical instruments and they respond well to music when the teacher uses a tambourine effectively in a dance lesson.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in English are well above the national average and all pupils achieve very well.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent.
- The subject is led and managed very well.
- Teachers' lesson plans are excellent and this ensures full and productive access to the English curriculum by pupils of all abilities.
- ICT is used very effectively to support and enhance pupils' work in English.
- Pupils' very good writing skills are not used as much as they should be in history and geography.

Commentary

35 Pupils attain standards that are well above the national average. They have improved since the last inspection. Standards of speaking and listening are very good throughout the school and teachers take full advantage of this in lessons. For example, pupils in Year 2 speak confidently and fluently and gain a great deal from being encouraged to regularly discuss their work with their 'talking partner'. They use their voices well and teachers emphasise the use of volume, tone and inflection to add interest when reading aloud or speaking. Teachers carefully introduce new vocabulary in lessons so that pupils ask questions and make suggestions in an increasingly precise form. Teachers are good role models and speak clearly and authoritatively when addressing the whole class. Learning support staff are very well integrated into the classroom and work seamlessly with teachers so that pupils of lower ability, particularly those with special educational needs, have an equal chance to develop and use their speaking and listening skills. Teachers are very good at asking questions that challenge pupils to answer clearly and to improve on their first efforts when needed.

36 Pupils enjoy reading because they are well taught and given a rich reading diet that includes well-chosen poetry. Teachers keep a careful check on pupils' reading and records are very detailed and informative. Standards of reading are very high throughout the school and this allows pupils to access and understand information in the other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils use the Internet, under clear guidance, to locate, select, refine and interpret information in many subjects. The English curriculum is innovative in a number of ways and this enables the school to target specific groups who may need further support in reading. For example, "Curiosity Kits" of stimulating books, toys and other materials address the needs of reluctant readers and foster the excellent home-school support for reading. Reading skills are constantly reinforced as in a Year 2 class where pupils used their knowledge of punctuation and word-building to improve their accuracy and intonation. ICT is used brilliantly to produce videos of the class puppet reading badly for comparison purposes. Resources for reading are exceptionally well-organised and many are kept in an attractive and useful central library area. The school is currently increasing and improving the stock of books, as some categories such as "World Religions" are not yet fully developed. The very high level of good quality resources promotes pupils' positive attitudes to reading and improves standards. The use of learning resources is a strong feature of most lessons and pupils encounter a very good range of authors and styles. This enables pupils of all abilities to extend their reading skills and knowledge and more able readers attain very high standards.

37 Teaching is very good. The teachers' use of ICT is very good with some excellent features. They use a very wide range of stimulating and innovative techniques to gain and hold pupils' attention. For example, inter-active whiteboards, digital photographs and a large number of learning programs are all used to great effect to enliven and enrich teaching. Surprisingly, during the inspection, very little use of pupils' ICT skills to develop their English work was observed in lessons. However, an analysis of their work shows that they use it regularly to develop their spelling, writing and reading. Pupils use the Internet well to collate information from a variety of sources and this extends their reading skills effectively. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 thoroughly enjoy their work in the "Press Pack" after-school club. They enhance their literacy skills a great deal by writing and producing a colourful and informative school newspaper to share with parents and pupils.

38 Assessment of pupils' work is excellent and is used very well to respond to their individual learning needs. Detailed information on how well they are doing is collected; for example, test results, reading scores and samples of pupils' assessed writing are thoroughly analysed to identify individual and group strengths and weaknesses. Teachers identify key targets pupils need to achieve to improve their standards further. The use of targets varies between classes and there is not yet a consistent system to help pupils understand what progress they are making towards achieving them. Through the rigorous assessment procedures, the English subject co-ordinators and other staff have identified the teaching and learning of writing as a current focus. They have combined very well together to produce a list of key writing skills for each year group. Teachers go to great lengths to carefully monitor these different types of written work. It is sampled and evaluated against clear criteria such as, "Evoking a response from the reader". Teaching plans are then changed to redress any identified weaknesses in pupils' writing skills. Teachers' very effective use of these strategies promotes pupils' writing skills successfully throughout the school. It helps them to achieve well above average levels. The school clearly identifies groups of pupils who would benefit from further teaching in specific areas. These pupils then get a concentrated programme of teaching support that enables them to attain higher standards.

39 Leadership and management of the subject are undertaken by two enthusiastic and knowledgeable members of staff and are very good. They work very effectively as a team to ensure that the special requirements of all years are met. They are very aware of the school's strengths and have identified a number of points for development to raise standards even further. There is a clear emphasis on maintaining a broad and rich curriculum that challenges pupils to achieve to their full potential. The subject leaders do a great deal to develop and share good working practice. They monitor the lesson plans and assessments of other teachers using an excellent computer system. This enables them to check on the teaching of the overall English curriculum and the progress pupils are making towards National Curriculum targets. Partly as a result of this, teachers' lesson plans are excellent and provide a very significant support for the high quality teaching.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

40 A current focus for improvement is to challenge pupils to apply and extend their very good writing skills across a broad range of subjects. Good use is made of Year 1 and 2 pupils' very good literacy skills at times. However, this is not a strong feature of work in history and geography in Years 3 to 6 where there is little evidence of pupils extending their writing skills, for example, by completing detailed narrative accounts. Although they possess the necessary skills, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in a broad range of styles in other subjects. Speaking and listening skills are already very good and teachers are using and extending them very well in many subjects. Pupils make very good use of skills such as listening, questioning and note-taking when experiencing first hand learning such as the visit of three paratroopers for a World War II history project. Reading is developed well through other subjects where pupils successfully use their skills in different reading tasks such as tables, accounts, reports and descriptions.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently very good teaching helps pupils to attain standards that are well above the national average throughout the school.
- Innovative teaching methods encourage pupils to develop an enthusiastic attitude to mathematics and a desire to achieve as well as they can.
- Teachers use very good marking to help pupils understand what they have to do to improve.
- Teachers use information on how well pupils are doing very effectively to target improvement and provide very good support and guidance.

Commentary

41 All pupils achieve very well in mathematics. They attain standards that are well above those expected for their age. The very good, and often excellent teaching helps pupils to make very good progress in all aspects of the subject. The school has made excellent improvement since the last inspection, especially in teaching and in the use of ICT to extend pupils' mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding. This results in higher standards being attained in all years. Evidence from lessons and from an analysis of pupils' work reflects the well above average results of the national tests for Year 6 and Year 2 pupils over the last three years. Almost every pupil achieves the level expected nationally for their age. The proportion who attain above expected levels is well above the national average. The school uses a very good range of information on how well pupils are doing in mathematics to track their progress individually. They identify areas of weakness and use improvement targets very well to check on pupils' progress. They use additional good quality teaching and support staff to help pupils improve these weaknesses and to be prepared fully for taking their tests. Pupils with special educational needs are given excellent individual guidance and support and many achieve the standard expected of their age. Gifted and talented mathematicians are extended very well in lessons and through additional activities, for example, Saturday numeracy classes at the local high school. They achieve very high standards.

42 Teaching is very good and often excellent. It is a key factor in promoting pupils' very good achievement. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour to which they respond very enthusiastically. Lessons have a brisk pace and are challenging and fun. Many teachers use the school's excellent ICT resources to provide innovative methods of extending pupils' mathematical skills. For example, in a Year 5 excellent lesson, the teacher extended pupils' understanding of how to measure angles accurately by requiring them to move and control a large protractor on an inter-active whiteboard. This grasped their interest and all were very attentive and very keen to contribute their ideas. This helped them to understand clearly how to use a protractor. The teacher then provided a good range of different activities that challenged all pupils to extend their skills and knowledge. Pupils were very keen to complete the activity and all achieved very well. Teachers use homework very well to extend pupils' numeracy skills and knowledge. Parents are kept well informed about homework and are encouraged to work with and help their child where needed. This contributes to pupils' interest and enjoyment of mathematics and to the standards attained. Marking is used very well to help pupils improve. Teachers clearly indicate what has been done well and what needs improvement. These comments, together with other information on how well pupils are doing in mathematics, are used successfully to help teachers and support staff to help groups of pupils in lessons and track the progress of individual pupils. In discussions with pupils, inspectors found that they have a very good understanding of what they need to improve and are very keen to do so.

43 The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has only recently taken on the subject responsibility. She works well in a good partnership with a teacher from the infants to provide a clear direction for the subject, aimed strongly at raising the very good standards even further. She has benefited from good advice and support from the local education

authority. She has developed procedures that help teachers to analyse pupils' work and identify areas for improvement. The co-ordinator monitors lessons and teachers' plans to evaluate how teachers are targeting these areas. These procedures are contributing effectively to pupils' achievements.

Mathematics across the curriculum

44 Teachers require pupils to apply and extend their mathematical skills in a good range of subjects. There were many examples, both in lessons observed and in an analysis of pupils' work, to show that standards in mathematics are supported well by pupils using their knowledge and skills frequently in science, geography, ICT, art and design and design and technology. For example, the use of spreadsheets in ICT and the drawing of plans to a specific scale in geography challenged pupils to use their number skills. This helps pupils to maintain high standards and improves their awareness of how mathematics contributes to their achievement in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality of pupils' knowledge and understanding demonstrated in lessons and in their discussions.
- The very high quality of teaching and the very good use of ICT help pupils to achieve very well.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it very well to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Pupil's attitudes to learning in science are very good.

Commentary

45 Pupils attain standards that are well above the national average. Standards have improved since the last inspection, especially in Years 3 to 6. In lessons, teachers show very good subject knowledge and engage pupils very effectively in high levels of discussions relating to their learning. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils predict accurately the materials that will or will not allow light through. They clearly understand when a test is not fair and know that the light has to be placed closely to each material they test. They tested carefully and checked their predictions well against their findings. Year 2 pupils discuss their work very confidently and give good explanations when they talk about reversible changes. Their work shows that they have a good understanding of the properties of materials and achieve very well by applying their knowledge and understanding in a very good range of practical scientific investigations.

46 Excellent teaching was observed in a Year 6 class where the teacher's very good subject knowledge and his excellent use of ICT held pupils' interest throughout. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the different parts of the flower and the difference between pollination and fertilisation. They made very good use of the Internet to show pictures of environments to assess pupils' understanding and they clearly demonstrated a very high knowledge of the different ways of seed dispersal. They explained very well the conditions seeds need to grow, using scientific language very confidently and accurately. All pupils were included fully and challenged successfully in this lesson and all achieved very well. When discussing science with pupils, they show very detailed subject knowledge and clearly enjoy their science lessons. They feel that the use of ICT is making science much more interesting and "even revision is great!"

47 The subject is led very well by a very capable co-ordinator. He has built very successfully on the very good procedures established by the previous co-ordinator. His subject knowledge is of a very high standard and his expectation of pupils' achievement is also very high. He checks teaching

plans to see that activities match pupils' needs and works closely with teachers to evaluate standards. All pupils are now being challenged very effectively and are achieving very well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **excellent**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Huge improvement since the last inspection, especially in the range and quality of learning resources.
- Excellent subject leadership and management have given a very clear direction to developing ICT and providing consistently high quality teaching.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic in their learning and attain standards that are very high compared with nationally expected levels.

Commentary

48 The school's provision for ICT and the standards attained by pupils were key issues at the last inspection. The vision of the headteacher, supported excellently by an experienced and very knowledgeable subject co-ordinator, governors and staff, has helped the school to make excellent improvement. The school has invested considerable funds in improving its resources and staff subject knowledge to make ICT a vital and integral part of almost all aspects of teaching and learning. Teachers all have laptops and inter-active whiteboards and use the excellent resources to provide innovative methods that grasp pupils' attention and stimulate their desire to learn. The school's proficiency in ICT and leadership and management led to it being awarded Beacon School status in 2000. It was renewed in 2003. The school has recently been awarded the NAACE Mark (The National Association of Advisers for Computers in Education) to recognise that ICT provision is of a very high standard. This high quality provision helps pupils throughout the school to achieve very high standards. They extend their ICT skills successfully in many subjects.

49 The excellent subject co-ordinator is a driving force in ensuring that the school's heavy commitment to using ICT is raising standards. Her own high level of expertise has been recognised in her Advanced Skills Teacher Award and in her involvement in national initiatives. The headteacher has used funds very effectively, for example, those arising from the Beacon status, to ensure that the co-ordinator no longer has a class teacher commitment. She is now able to work alongside other teachers to improve their confidence and teaching skills. They often team teach and pupils benefit from their very good guidance and support. This helps pupils to develop excellent ICT skills, knowledge and understanding. The co-ordinator's role and contribution ensure that the school's high quality computer suite, known by everyone as 'the Cyberlab', is in constant use. She monitors teachers' plans, which are all stored on the school's ICT system, to check that skills are being taught effectively. She provides very good guidance on using specific programs and other resources. Pupils have many opportunities, in lessons and in lunchtime and after school clubs, to apply and extend their skills and raise their standards of attainment.

50 Teaching is very good overall and often excellent. Teachers often work in a very effective partnership with the subject co-ordinator to provide high quality teaching and help pupils attain high standards. They plan in very good detail to ensure that pupils make very good progress in all aspects of ICT. Teachers have high expectations of pupils to apply their skills independently, or when working with a partner, to produce very good quality work. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, the teacher required pupils to use their note taking skills when watching a video of life in an Alpine village. She then challenged them to use their notes to identify key points for inclusion in their multi-media presentation on locations in Europe. Teachers use their detailed planning very effectively to enable pupils' skills to build very well on prior learning. For example, Year 6 pupils extend their knowledge of multi-media presentations by including images, sound and text. An analysis of pupils' work shows that they make very good progress in applying and extending their skills. For example, Year 2 pupils phrase questions accurately to interrogate a database on 'ourselves'. These are extended very effectively in Year 1 to 6 when pupils interrogate more comprehensive databases and use spreadsheets to solve mathematical problems. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are increasingly confident in their use of ICT and accurately use specific terminology, such as *icon*, *field* and *input*. They clearly

enjoy using the Cyberlab. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the different programs and how they get information from the Internet to use in their work, for example, in history.

Example of outstanding practice

Challenging pupils to apply and extend their ICT skills

Year 5 pupils were working hard in pairs to write their own program to use a geared motor to control the moving parts of their Water Cycle poster. They were busily discussing how to use different routines to make different parts of the poster work in sequence. The teacher used her laptop very effectively to flash the message 'Look to the front' on all computer screens. Pupils responded immediately and discussions stopped. The teacher used questions very successfully to extend pupils' understanding of how to introduce sub-routines. A more able pupil gave a detailed explanation as to how he would use a sub-routine to determine when the clouds would 'move' and how the 'sun' (bulb) would light up. The teacher then challenged the class to complete their program before the end of the lesson. She used an extension program very effectively, for those who completed their initial task. All pupils achieved their goal. The lesson ended on a very positive, excited note as the teacher informed the class that they would now be challenged to link their computers to control boxes and motors to see if their moving posters worked.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

51 The school provides an outstanding range of opportunities for pupils to learn by using ICT. Teachers make extensive use of excellent resources to challenge pupils to apply their skills and knowledge in most subjects. Teachers and support staff make very good use of ICT to revise and extend pupils' mathematical skills, particularly those with some number uncertainties. In some of the lessons observed, pupils used their ICT knowledge very successfully to extend their learning in literacy, numeracy, science, music, geography and design and technology. An analysis of pupils' work showed that learning in history and art and design was also enhanced by pupils' ICT skills and knowledge, for example, when researching information about famous artist and historical events.

HUMANITIES

52 Only one **history** lesson was seen during the inspection. Pupils' work and teaching plans were studied and the subject was discussed with the co-ordinator and a group of Year 6 pupils. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision or standards attained by pupils.

53 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good use of their literacy skills when writing about the significance and meaning of poppies and the Cenotaph. They show a developing ability to understand historical evidence and to put historical facts in the correct time order. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not make enough use of their very good literacy skills to write extended, empathetic accounts. Work in pupils' books indicates that teachers place an undue emphasis on colouring in pictures. This is not a good use of time because it reduces the opportunity to develop deeper historical skills and understanding. Excellent use is made of visitors such as three paratroopers who gave Year 6 pupils a memorable and exciting first-hand learning experience they will never forget.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good development of key geographical skills.
- Good and often very good teaching encourages pupils' interest and promotes their achievements well.
- More able pupils do not use their very good writing skills enough to achieve detailed explanations of geographical and environmental features.
- Good subject leadership ensures that standards are monitored and evaluated closely and weaknesses are targeted well through a detailed subject action plan.

Commentary

54 Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain standards overall that are above those expected nationally for their age. They are similar to those at the last inspection. Most pupils achieve very well in developing their geographical skills and apply them very effectively to attain well above average levels, for example, in map work. Their knowledge and understanding of different geographical locations and environmental issues meet expected standards overall, although more able pupils are not challenged enough to use their knowledge to explain the differences. They are not required to use their knowledge and their very good writing skills enough to provide detailed explanations and to show a clear understanding of geographical features. This limits their achievement. An analysis of pupils' work shows that, in some lessons, more able pupils are more concerned with the accurate presentation of carefully coloured drawings rather than the depth of written content.

55 Teaching is good. It was often very good in the lessons observed, although an analysis of pupils' work shows that teachers' expectations of pupils' achievements are not always high enough. Teachers make very good use of ICT resources to grasp pupils' interest and attention. For example, teachers planned and prepared in detail to use a computer program, together with video resources, to improve Year 4 pupils' knowledge of life in an Alpine village. Teachers involve pupils' very successfully in their learning, for example, when Year 3 pupils were required to apply their mapping skills on an inter-active whiteboard. The teacher challenged them to 'drag' and 'drop' particular symbols on to the correct place on the outline map of the United Kingdom. These methods capture pupils' interest. They are enthusiastic in their approach and keen to use their ICT skills to extend their geographical knowledge. Year 6 pupils use their very good ICT and mapping skills to work in pairs and present a detailed multi-media presentation on a European country. They get a good range of geographical information from books and the Internet and present it very well. They show a good knowledge of geographical facts, although their understanding of how geographical features affect people's lives is not clearly developed.

56 The subject is well led and managed and this contributes effectively to pupils' achievement. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the subject's strengths and weaknesses, for example, the need to extend more able pupils in Years 3 to 6. She has drawn up an action plan to target this aspect. The co-ordinator monitors and evaluates teachers' plans regularly and has made good use of national subject guidance to ensure that all pupils are included fully in a good range of learning activities.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

57 No judgements were made on **design and technology** as no lessons were observed and no completed pupils' work was analysed. However, many classes had some work available. The younger pupils have made good quality finger puppets and discussion with older pupils revealed that they had made sandwiches and biscuits as part of food technology. As part of a moving toys project, Year 5 pupils show a good understanding of cams and how they work. Most pupils are very confident and have good independent skills, although they are not always challenged to extend them enough. For example, teachers and other support adults created a hole safely through a plastic corrugated sheet before requiring pupils to enlarge it. This year pupils visit a local learning centre where they use computer-aided design to make a program to design and make a plastic paper fastener.

58 The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' plans carefully to ensure a broad range of activities and has identified the need to ensure a more consistent development of pupils' skills and knowledge in design and technology. She has established a subject action plan to focus on this aspect.

Art and design

Provision for art and design is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop their skills very well using a wide range of different materials and techniques.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to work with visiting artists.
- Teachers use very good links with ICT to extend pupils' skills.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to work in the style of a wide range of artists.

Commentary

59 Pupils achieve very well throughout the school and attain standards that are well above those expected nationally. They have been maintained at the high level reported in the last inspection. All pupils use a very wide range of materials and techniques to demonstrate very good skills when creating their pictures. Younger pupils explore materials to create very good self-portraits, using collage techniques effectively to add hair, facial features and even glasses. All pupils have very good opportunities to study the work of a range of artists. As they develop their skills, pupils look at the work of Monet and produce delightful pictures to represent the style of the artist, using several different painting techniques successfully.

60 Teaching is very good. It enthuses pupils and helps them to achieve very well. In Year 4, pupils use their sketchbooks well to collect ideas from the work of Gustav Klimt to help them plan their own work. The teacher promotes a keen interest in the shapes used by the artist and the ways in which he uses gold and jewels to decorate his work. The work they produce is of a very high quality. The teacher used ICT very well in this lesson to enable pupils to see a good range of downloaded examples of the artist's work. Year 5 pupils extend their skills and learning very successfully to create their own repeating patterns and decorative clay tiles in the style of William Morris. Good links are made between their work about India in geography and their artwork. The very good teaching and careful planning enable all pupils to achieve three pieces of high quality work using their knowledge of India and its customs well. These include detailed fabric paintings, well proportioned models of hands using air-dried clay and attractive designs based on authentic Indian patterns. The last group demonstrate good use of colour washes to create a background for their own silhouette of the Taj Mahal. Pupils are very well supported by teaching assistants, without depriving them of opportunities to be creative and to make choices. Lower attaining pupils make better progress as a result of this very good support. This work contributes significantly to their cultural development.

61 Artists visit the school regularly to work with all pupils and their impact is clearly evident in the many excellent displays of pupils' work around the school. For example, the entrance hall has been transformed into a space environment. A large-scale model of a spaceman dominates the display and even the staff room door is now the door to mission control! The entrance to the school contains a very high quality, most delightful mosaic wall plaque that depicts the life of the school and the church. All the older pupils have designed and made a tile to contribute to this, working alongside a visiting artist. The younger pupils have their own mosaic plaque of self-portraits and this shows much sensitivity in some of the representations.

62 The subject is very well led by a very enthusiastic and capable co-ordinator. She leads by example and supports other teachers very well. Resources for the subject are very good and they promote the very good use of display throughout the school. This subject is a strength of the school. The contribution of art and design to other areas of creativity has helped the school to achieve the Silver Artmark.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain high standards throughout the school and demonstrate very good musical knowledge.
- Teachers use ICT very effectively to extend pupils' musical skills and knowledge.
- The quality and number of musical instruments in school are very good.
- The very good work of a parent helper results in very good progress of the many recorder groups.

Commentary

63 The school has maintained the very high standards seen at the time of the last inspection. By the time pupils leave the school, a large majority read music and are competent musicians. Discussion with pupils shows that they have very good subject knowledge. They talk very confidently about their lessons and Year 2 pupils are very happy to sing unaccompanied to demonstrate how tuneful their singing is. These pupils have a good sense of rhythm and clap a given rhythm back very accurately. They listen carefully and this helps them to develop both their pitch and rhythm work. They understand the difference between tuned and un-tuned instruments and play high and low notes accurately on the glockenspiel. They respond to teacher's cards very well when playing loud/soft, long/short and high and low notes. The very good use of ICT enables them to see the position of high and low notes on the staff projected onto the inter-active whiteboard. This consolidates their knowledge and understanding very well.

64 Teaching is very good, with some excellent practice. For example, in an excellent Year 5 lesson, the teacher enabled pupils to compose their own music to represent a planet of their choice. Pupils used ICT skills very well to choose particular instruments and write notes for this instrument on the treble staff on the computer screen. They understand how to use signs to indicate a repeat in their composition and how to input this in order for the computer to repeat their tune. Others write their own composition on manuscript paper using a glockenspiel to experiment. These pupils show a good understanding of the value of different notes and the time signatures at the beginning of a piece of music. They use these very well in their work. The teacher's excellent knowledge of music and the software being used enables pupils to achieve very well. They perform and evaluate their work and decide that you cannot use a sharp on the computer but you can on the glockenspiel. Learning is extended very well here as the teacher demonstrates how they can change key on the computer. Pupils consider carefully whether their composition portrays the atmosphere on their own special planet. The high quality teaching and excellent use of resources produced a very high standard of work.

65 Music in school is not limited to lessons. Well over half the pupils play a musical instrument from the very wide range provided. With the exception of recorders, all these are taught by visiting musicians and there is a designated music room in school. Each day, at lunchtime, a parent helper works with different ability and age groups to develop their recorder playing. This very good contribution has a significant impact on the achievement of these pupils. All the musicians contributed to the music assembly presented to parents and pupils during the inspection. This was work for a local music festival and was of a high quality. Parents were very appreciative and supportive. The school is the centre for the Local Arts Festival and pupils take part in all aspects of this, enjoying folk singing, opera and displays of the work of local artists.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain above nationally expected standards.
- Very good teaching helps pupils to make very good progress in developing games skills.
- Very good subject leadership encourages pupils to participate in an excellent range of extra-curricular sporting activities and to be successful in sporting competitions.
- Pupils have enthusiastic attitudes to physical education and are keen to improve their performance.
- Pupils do not use evaluation skills consistently to improve the standard of their work.

Commentary

66 Pupils attain above expected standards throughout the school. The games skills of most pupils in Years 3 to 6 are well above expected levels. Very good teaching and very good subject leadership have improved standards and the range of physical activities since the last inspection. Pupils achieve very well, especially in Years 3 to 6. Year 6 pupils show good throwing, catching and striking skills when working in groups to improve their cricket skills. They benefit from very good teaching and most develop good batting and bowling techniques. A large number of pupils, especially in Years 3 to 6, extend their games skills very successfully during break and lunch time activities. The school provides a very good range of games equipment to encourage pupils to take part in physical activities out of lessons with their friends. They play together well in the playground or on the good sized playing-field. Many participate in football and netball clubs run by staff. Pupils also have the opportunity to be coached by a specialist football coach from Blackburn Rovers and a judo coach. This excellent range of activities, promoted by staff expertise, encourages pupils' enthusiastic involvement and helps them to achieve above average levels of skills and tactical knowledge. They use them very successfully in inter-school sporting competitions, for example, in football, rugby, netball and indoor athletics.

67 Teaching is good overall. It is very good in developing pupils' games skills. Teachers are enthusiastic in their approach to teaching physical education. This generates pupils' interest and involvement and helps them to achieve well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. This results in all pupils working very hard in order to achieve well and receive praise and recognition for their efforts. Many teachers have good subject knowledge and use it very effectively to extend pupils' skills and knowledge, for example, in games lessons and in the well-attended netball and football clubs. Teachers evaluate pupils' skills effectively to recognise what they have done well and to point out ways in which they could improve the quality of movement, for example, in gymnastics. This results in higher standards. They do not always encourage pupils to evaluate their own performance, or that of others in their group, to ensure that there is a consistent focus on raising standards.

68 The leadership and management of physical education are very good. The co-ordinator has promoted good improvement since the last inspection. She has worked closely with advisory staff from the local education authority to establish a clear and well planned programme of work that includes all required activities. She has worked alongside other teachers to give guidance and improve staff confidence and subject knowledge. Her enthusiastic influence has extended the range of activities for pupils and encouraged the school's involvement in, and parental support for a very good range of competitions. The school's excellent use of ICT allows parents to be kept fully informed about the school's successes through digital photographs on the school's web-site. For example, the parents of Year 6 pupils can look at how well their children are doing on the different adventure activities during their residential trip. The very good leadership ensures that a comprehensive physical education programme continues to be given a high profile and promotes pupils' physical and personal development very effectively.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

69 Only two lessons were observed so no overall judgement was made on provision and the quality of teaching. However, discussions with pupils and an analysis of teaching plans show that the school has improved its programme since the last inspection. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator took on the responsibility last school year. She has worked closely with staff, through staff meetings and a residential weekend conference, to discuss and agree the programme of work and different teaching approaches, for example, the use of circle time. She has used good subject guidance from the local education authority to establish a clear, well-organised programme of activities. The school's Healthy Schools Award and Merseyside Environmental Award recognised pupils' increased awareness of these important aspects of their lives and their roles as responsible citizens.

70 Lesson observations and discussion with pupils show that they enjoy the opportunities to discuss personal issues within their classes, for example, on friendship and bullying. They respect the views and ideas of others by listening carefully and contribute their own opinions clearly and sensibly. A detailed consideration of pupils' views and ideas are limited by too few opportunities for pupils to speak in some large classes.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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