

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST BERNARD'S ROMAN CATHOLIC (VA)
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Ellesmere Port

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111355

Headteacher: Mr B Brennan

Reporting inspector: Ms B Matusiak-Varley
19938

Dates of inspection: 10th – 11th February 2003

Inspection number: 247108

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sherbourne Road Ellesmere Port Cheshire
Postcode:	CH65 5EW
Telephone number:	(0151) 3552047
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B Letissier
Date of previous inspection:	8 th December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Bernard's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School is an average-sized school with 210 pupils on roll, 104 boys and 106 girls, which provides education for children aged 4 to 11. The school is situated in the Stanney Estate in an area of high social deprivation in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. Twenty-six per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. Twenty-five per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs (SEN), which is also above average. The range and nature of special educational need relate to learning difficulties and behaviour problems. One pupil has a statement of SEN. The school is part of an education action zone (EAZ) initiative aimed at raising academic standards and improving the self-esteem of parents, carers and pupils, and attendance levels. Almost all pupils are of white British origin, with 1.2 per cent of black Caribbean, Irish and mixed-race heritage. These pupils do not have English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to the reception class is well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Bernard's School is a very good school with excellent features and provides a secure and highly effective learning environment for all of its pupils. It rightly enjoys a very high level of parental and community esteem because of the high aspirations it has for all of its pupils. All groups of pupils achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment and historically the school has attained above average standards by the end of Year 6. This year, due to the high percentage of pupils attaining below average in Year 2 and Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are in line with the national average, but in writing are above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The school has many great strengths and very few shortcomings. It has a very good ethos due to the excellent leadership of the headteacher, who has created a high-performing team of dedicated and very hard-working staff. Very good teaching based upon good curriculum provision ensures that pupils have very good attitudes to learning and excellent behaviour, and are very well prepared for secondary school. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with national averages in English, mathematics and science. All groups of pupils achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. Standards in writing at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above the national average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout the school and, as a result, pupils develop very good attitudes to learning; their behaviour is excellent.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall and is a contributory factor to their very good personal development.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. A clear educational direction is provided for staff and governors through very effective school self-evaluation and the implementation of performance management.
- The school has an excellent relationship with parents.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) across the school are below national expectations as, whilst pupils' achievements are good, the lack of an ICT suite inhibits pupils from making even better progress.
- The role of the subject co-ordinators in science, ICT and all foundation subjects; whole school planning; target setting for individual pupils.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1997. Since then it has made very good improvement overall and over time standards have risen in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The quality of teaching is now very good and has improved from being good. There are more examples of very good teaching. Leadership and management has improved from very good to excellent. The school has made good improvement in ICT but further improvement is needed in developing an ICT suite. Schemes of work have been produced for art and design, design and technology and ICT, and large apparatus has been purchased for the youngest pupils in the reception classes. The school has maintained the many strengths identified in the previous report, in particular the excellent partnership with parents and the very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). The school's capacity for further improvement is very good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6, based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	D	B	A
mathematics	C	B	A	A
science	C	C	B	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below national expectations in all areas of learning but especially in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Children in the reception class make very good gains in learning but do not attain the Early Learning Goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world, in spite of achieving very well in relation to their prior attainment. In Key Stage 1 pupils make very good gains in learning and 2002 test results show that, in comparison with pupils in all schools, they attained average levels in writing, mathematics and teacher assessments in science. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' attainment was above the national average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. By the end of Year 6, in comparison with those in all schools, pupils attained above average standards in English and science and well above average standards in mathematics. In comparison with those in similar schools standards were well above average in English, mathematics and science. Inspection findings show that this year there is a high percentage of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) in Year 2 and Year 6 and, as a result, standards are not as high as the 2002 test results; as a result, standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with the national average, but pupils' achievements in relation to their prior attainment are very good. Pupils' achievements could be even better if more emphasis was placed on developing individual target setting with pupils' full involvement throughout the school. At the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils attain above average standards in writing due to the very good use of assessment and very good teaching.

In the majority of foundation subjects pupils attain expected standards and make very good progress. Standards in ICT are just below the national average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and pupils make good progress. The school has rightly identified the need to purchase more computers so that pupils can regularly practise their ICT skills as very few pupils have access to computers at home. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are used very well to support work in other subjects. Pupils with SEN make very good gains in learning. In Key Stage 1 the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics is below the national average; in Key Stage 2 it is above the national average. This represents

very good added value. There are no gender differences in attainment. The school sets challenging targets for English and mathematics and consistently meets them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very positive and speak well of the school. They demonstrate throughout the day how highly they value the school community. They participate with enthusiasm in all aspects of school life and show great willingness to undertake duties and responsibilities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils are polite and actively co-operate in lessons. They treat each other, staff and visitors with courtesy and respect.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good and relationships are excellent throughout the school. The school works very hard at ensuring that all groups of pupils enjoy equal self-esteem and this is reflected in the very positive harmony that exists throughout.
Attendance	Good. Pupils love coming to school and attendance figures have improved. Pupils arrive in school on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is very good overall. During the week of the inspection 22 lessons were seen. One excellent lesson was seen in Year 5 in literacy. Seventeen lessons were very good, three were good and one was satisfactory. Very good teaching was seen in all year groups. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in the school. The high quality of teaching is underpinned by the consistent and coherent policy for teaching and learning that is applied in all subjects. This is in addition to the attention paid to the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and the very successful implementation of catch-up programmes ensures that basic skills are very well taught. The headteacher, senior management team and local education authority have monitored teaching very well and effective implementation of performance management, linked to the continuous professional development of staff, has ensured that all teachers are working collectively to raise standards. This is seen in the very good progress pupils in both key stages make in writing. The headteacher has very high expectations of his staff and, as a result, lessons are conducted at a very good pace and with a sense of urgency. Learning-support staff make a very effective contribution to lessons. Assessment during lessons is very good and teachers generally use what they learn from it very effectively in day-to-day planning; as a result, tasks set meet the needs of all pupils. The teaching of pupils with SEN is very good. It is thorough and methodical, and focuses appropriately on helping pupils overcome their barriers to learning. Throughout the school, pupils' very good attitudes ensure that they are highly productive in the amount of work that they produce in all subjects, especially in writing.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is enriched with a very good range of visits and visitors, especially in the creative arts. The recent work undertaken with musicians and artists has greatly enhanced pupils' creative learning experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Individual needs are identified well and appropriate programmes are in place to meet them. Very effective use is made of learning-support staff.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. An excellent Christian ethos permeates all aspects of school life. Acts of collective worship, participation in the sacraments and the living out of the school's mission statement promote pupils' personal development very well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school has a very strong commitment to the welfare of its pupils and promotes their safety and wellbeing very well. Academic and personal development is very effectively monitored and the information is used very well to help pupils improve further.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is totally dedicated to ensuring that his pupils achieve their full potential. He does not tolerate low expectations and his long-term commitment to the pupils and the community has rightfully gained him a very high level of respect. He has ensured that any weaknesses are readily addressed through very effective school self-evaluation.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors are highly committed to the school's success and are knowledgeable about its strengths and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher, the senior management team and the local education authority analyse the school's performance very well. Performance management is very effectively implemented; the principles of best value are well understood and consistently applied.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school plans and manages its budget very well and makes very effective use of all the grants and monies received in order to raise pupils' attainment. The headteacher ensures that all monies are appropriately targeted to raising standards and developing teachers' knowledge through very-well-targeted training. The school accommodation and resources are good overall. The outside area is very well developed and makes a strong contribution to pupils' excellent behaviour and very good social skills.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Catholic ethos of the school.• The headteacher and staff are very approachable.• Pupils learn well and are very well behaved.• The school is a very caring community.• Homework is given regularly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents have no negative comments to make about the school.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views and share their very high regard for the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with national averages in English, mathematics and science. All groups of pupils achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. Standards in writing at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above the national averages.

1. Pupils' attainment on entry to the reception class is well below national expectations in all areas of learning, but especially in communication, language and literacy, in mathematical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. In spite of making very good gains in learning in relation to their prior attainment, children do not attain the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning, but they make very good gains in acquiring basic skills of speaking and listening, and early reading and number work. This prepares them well for coping with work in Year 1. National test results and teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 for 2002 show that in comparison with those in all schools, standards were below the national averages in reading, and in line with national averages in writing and mathematics. Teachers' assessments for science indicate that standards are in line with national averages. In comparison with that in similar schools, pupils' attainment was above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics. Over three years, taking into consideration the average National Curriculum points scores, the performance of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics fell below the national averages. There were no significant differences in attainment by gender, although boys out-performed girls in mathematics. In reading and writing the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels (level 3) was below average, whereas in mathematics and science it was broadly in line.
2. By the end of Year 6, in comparison with those in all schools, pupils attained above-average standards in English and science and well-above average standards in mathematics. In comparison with those in similar schools, standards in English, mathematics and science were well above average. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels (level 5) was above average in English, mathematics and science. Over three years the performance of pupils was in line with the national average in English. In mathematics and science it exceeded the national averages. Boys slightly out-performed girls in English, but these gender differences were not apparent during the inspection.
3. This year the school has a high percentage of pupils in both Years 2 and 6 who have special educational needs and this affects the overall attainment of the classes. Inspection findings show that, by the end of both key stages, standards in speaking and listening are broadly in line with national averages, but many pupils have an impoverished vocabulary and find it difficult to choose a wide range of descriptive words, especially to identify their feelings. They also confuse tenses and many pupils find it difficult to distinguish between slang and correct usage of English. Teachers work very hard at providing correct models of speech for their pupils. For example, in a Year 6 class one pupil alerted the teacher to rhyming patterns in a verse by saying, "It rhymes, don't it?" The teacher upgraded his response by reminding him that the correct way of saying it would be, "It rhymes, doesn't it?"
4. By the end of both key stages standards in reading are in line with national averages and the oldest pupils are very keen on reading. They love poetry and demonstrate their understanding of reading conventions in the writing that they undertake. For example, pupils in both Years 2 and 6 show a very good understanding of settings, character development and conflict resolution. In Year 6 one pupil captured the required imagery of poetry by writing about fog:

"It vanishes and floats back outside
hides behind walls
smoothly flows into the distance as the
sun begins."
5. In Year 2, pupils studying the story of "The Princess and the Frog", after a visit from a theatre group, wrote extensively about the prince being handsome, sensible and brave.

6. By the end of both Years 2 and 6, pupils have a good grasp of the four rules of number. The youngest pupils are making very good gains in understanding number bonds and have good recall of number facts, because they are consistently asked to explain their thinking in the working out of problems. This helps teachers identify any particular barriers pupils might have in their learning. By the end of Year 6, pupils are confident mathematicians who will “have a go” at problem-solving and generally correctly identify the strategies needed for doing so. They have secure knowledge of angles and know how to make an acute angle obtuse, using useful apparatus. They can add and subtract multiples of 10, 100 and 1000 and are making very good gains in understanding mental methods of applying the four rules of number.
7. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in science are in line with national averages and pupils' achievements are very good. They know how to set up experiments and record their findings, although they do not always label their diagrams neatly. Pupils ask relevant questions, such as seen in Year 2, where they were very keen to know what the nutrients were in compost that helped plants to grow. Pupils have good skills of hypothesis and observation and make accurate predictions. By the end of Year 6 they understand the working of an eye, know about balanced forces and that gravity is measured in Newtons, and know how to work out mathematical problems relating weight to force. Pupils make good progress in checking results and asking scientific questions. They are developing an appropriate scientific vocabulary because they are systematically taught subject-specific words, such as 'gravity', 'upthrust', 'fair testing', 'reflection', 'opaque' and 'translucent'. Pupils of all abilities make very good gains in learning because of the very good quality of teaching, the expertise of the headteacher in teaching science to pupils in Key Stage 2, the good use of assessment, effective performance management, regular monitoring of teaching and learning and very well-developed school self-evaluation.
8. Since the previous inspection, judging from an analysis of trends over time, standards have risen in English, mathematics and science and, by the end of Year 6, have been above average. This year, due to the nature of the groups of pupils in Years 2 and 6, many of whom experience learning difficulties, standards are not as high as identified by the national tests in 2002, but pupils' achievements in relation to their prior attainment are very good.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout the school and, as a result, pupils develop very good attitudes to learning and their behaviour is excellent.

9. Since the previous inspection the quality of teaching and learning has improved and there are more examples of very good teaching. This is because all staff are very dedicated to improving on their previous best performance, have very high expectations of their pupils, which are reflected in the amount of work they are expected to complete in lessons, and ensure that all groups of pupils are effectively challenged in lessons. A carefully planned programme of professional development ensures that the training needs of staff are identified and met. The result of this is that teaching is now very good overall, with an example of excellent teaching seen in Year 5 in literacy. In this lesson, pupils were learning about forms that illustrate different types of poems and identify key features. When learning about “Gran, can you rap?”, pupils were totally absorbed in their learning because the subject content matched their interest levels. The lesson moved on at a very fast pace and both the teacher and her pupils demonstrated sheer enjoyment when identifying alliteration, stanzas, and rhyme. The teacher's classroom management skills were excellent, due to the choice of subject content. Pupils were sitting on the edge of their seats, wanting to find out more. The interactive whiteboard was used very well to support learning and, as a result, pupils made very good progress.
10. During the inspection, 22 lessons were seen. One lesson was excellent, 17 lessons were very good, three were good and one was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Teachers are very hard-working and want the very best for their pupils. They systematically apply the school's teaching and learning policy, which focuses on the identification of clear learning objectives, checking pupils' understanding and using the plenary session to support learning. Teachers are aware of the many different ways that pupils learn and, as a result, provide plenty of opportunities for them to see, hear, write and explain their learning.

11. Support staff make a very valid contribution to pupils' learning. They ensure that pupils with learning difficulties are given very good explanations and that they are clear about what they need to do. For example, catch-up programmes, aimed at raising standards, are very well implemented and have a very positive effect on pupils' learning. Staff work very well together and excellent relationships exist throughout the school. The co-ordinator for special educational needs supports staff very well, ensures that pupils' individual education programmes are implemented and that all pupils with special educational needs are given the appropriate skills to access the curriculum. As a result these pupils feel confident and have very good attitudes to learning.
12. Behaviour is excellent because lessons are so well structured that pupils, even if they wanted to misbehave, do not have the opportunity to do so, due to the strong emphasis which teachers place on keeping them absorbed in learning through their very good subject knowledge, very clear explanations, very effective use of time and good marking. Class targets for raising attainment are set and this is having a positive effect on learning. The school has recognised that this practice could now be extended to individual target setting in order to raise standards even further.
13. Homework is used very well to support learning. Pupils see the value of it and told inspectors that, "Homework helps you remember what you did in class." Pupils are very well motivated to learn because they know that their teachers will support them should they encounter any difficulties. For example, they add a sense of urgency by setting deadlines for task completion and reminding pupils of elapsed time.
14. The learning of children in the reception class is very good. There is an appropriate balance of learning through discovery and structured play. Good resources are used to support children's learning, regular observations and assessments are carried out, and basic skills of reading, writing and number are taught very well. Children are given lots of opportunities to sing, dance and be creative and expectations of their achievements are consistently high. Teachers are fully aware of the children's limitations and ensure that learning opportunities are structured in such a way as to overcome them. For example, in a very good numeracy lesson the class teacher set very high expectations of pupils by providing them with lots of challenging problem-solving activities to be completed in a very short space of time. She consistently demonstrated the shape and number word and asked children to keep repeating both of them. As a result, all children made very good gains in learning.
15. Teachers' planning is very good, although it does not follow a common format. In order to facilitate monitoring by co-ordinators, a common format for planning adopted by all staff would enable subject-specific skills to be monitored more effectively. At present all staff plan very well, but the wide variety of approaches adopted makes the monitoring of skills difficult for co-ordinators to track. The management of learning in groups is very effective, with identified outcomes planned for all groups and with appropriate work being provided. Very good support is given to pupils within these groups, based upon careful daily assessment by the teachers and support staff. A key feature of the very good teaching is the very concentrated and consistent commitment to teamwork that is demonstrated, brought about by the excellent leadership of the headteacher, who has a very clear sense of educational direction in raising standards. He insists that teachers place considerable emphasis on learning as an active process where pupils have a wide variety of first-hand experiences, as demonstrated by the very good enrichment of learning opportunities brought about by visits, visitors, trips and opportunities to work with artists and musicians.
16. Teachers have successfully created a culture of "It's cool to be clever" throughout the school and pupils' involvement and interactive learning are fostered well. They genuinely want to learn. They appreciate the hard work that has gone into creating an exciting indoor and outdoor environment for their use. Behaviour is excellent because the school is buzzing with excitement and pupils do not have time to get bored.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall and is a contributory factor in pupils' very good personal development.

17. Pupils are given good learning opportunities which are enhanced by very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant, and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. The school's mission statement of "Love one another as I have loved you", alongside the establishment of a school community based upon true Catholic values, underpins all aspects of school life. Staff encourage pupils to develop "the higher self" by fostering values of truth, honesty, self-respect and care for others. Each day an act of collective worship takes place in the classroom. Very good links exist between the school and the church and the school is seen as a focal point for the community. St Bernard's School is a living Christian community, where each individual is valued.
18. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities for reflection on principles and values. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson pupils discussed the gift of sight and the miracles of the working of the human eye, and in Year 4 they were given opportunities to discover the wonders of evaporation and sugar-crystal formation.
19. The school sends out very clear and consistent signals to pupils through offering them opportunities to make decisions, both individually and collectively. The expectation of positive pupil behaviour is embedded in the culture of the school. The success of this approach is underlined by the care taken of the resources and fabric of the school and by pupils' willingness to take responsibility for tasks within the class and around the school. Older pupils play well with younger ones and ensure that they are well looked after. There is a very strong sense of community that helps to create a common vision and mutual inter-dependence within the school. For example, the school's involvement in an arts week sponsored by the Education Action Zone contributed significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils understand that artistic inspiration resides in each one of us; they particularly appreciated the work of a Zimbabwean band and other musicians and this contributed significantly to this understanding. Pupils have worked with artists and poets, and understand that everyone has the potential to be creative.
20. On entry to the Foundation Stage (the reception class), children often require considerable socialisation in working in a large group with the constraints that this poses on individual freedom. This is achieved very well by the reception class teachers who provide very good learning opportunities for these young children, where independence is fostered and where they are encouraged to choose and put away their own resources. Children develop very good skills of personal development because good resources are used which engage their interests. The school is very effective in treating pupils as maturing individuals and enhancing this aspect of their personal development. For example, in Mass, pupils undertake responsibility for writing "bidding prayers". They confidently read the lesson from the Bible and lead hymns. The headteacher and staff show a great deal of respect for their pupils and work constantly to reinforce their self-esteem. The result is a community in which pupils are equally valued and where the calm and ordered atmosphere contributes very well to their personal development, resulting in all groups of pupils being very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. A clear educational direction is provided for staff and governors through the school's very effective self-evaluation and the implementation of performance management.

21. The leadership and management of the school are excellent. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when they were judged to be very good. The headteacher has been at the school for a long time and has steered it very successfully through many changes. He is very well respected by staff, parents, pupils and the whole community because he has dedicated himself to providing the very best for his pupils, many of whom have very under-privileged backgrounds. The headteacher knows the parents very well, many of whom he taught, and he provides a very stable anchor for the community. The very good monitoring of the quality of teaching is enhanced by the coherent approach of school improvement planning, whereby teachers' performance-management targets are incorporated into school planning. This, in turn, feeds into effective planning for in-service training to meet staff and school needs. The result of this can be seen in the improved standards in writing at the end of Years 2 and 6, which have been part of the school's focus on raising standards.

22. The headteacher is ably supported by his senior management team, who monitor pupils' progress through a range of formal and informal procedures. These include internal teacher-assessment procedures and the use of nationally-validated assessments which are undertaken yearly. Formal assessment and records of achievement in each subject area contribute to overall information and are used alongside an analysis of baseline assessments to establish how much progress pupils are making. The school ensures that, in addition to monitoring teaching and learning, there are very efficient systems in place for gaining information about other aspects of its work. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well, are very dedicated to the school and are regular visitors to the school. They are fully involved in school development planning and monitor the school budget on a regular basis, looking at planned spending patterns and the extent to which the school spends its money wisely. The impact of this monitoring on the work of the school is clearly established through effective planning for school improvement. The school improvement plan is clear and identifies ways of moving the school forward with an effective and clearly-defined annual school plan. The identification of priorities is securely based on the very good self-review process that the school undertakes and has a very clear focus on raising standards. Criteria for success are clearly stated and all staff are clear about the part they play in helping to raise standards through the very good implementation of performance management. The school has an appropriate number of staff to teach the National Curriculum and overall resources to supporting teaching and learning are good. The headteacher manages all grants very effectively, including monies received from the Education Action Zone, and provides exciting learning opportunities for his pupils. The very good range of photographic displays around the school clearly demonstrates the school's commitment to working with artists in order to raise standards and pupils' self-esteem. Since the previous inspection all key issues have been addressed and standards are continually rising.

The school achieves excellent relationships with parents.

23. Parents rate the school very highly. The parents' meeting held before the inspection highlighted the fact that parents trust the headteacher and staff implicitly with their children. Parents remarked that they are always made to feel welcome within the school and that staff keep them very well informed of their children's successes and occasional minor misdemeanours. Parents help out in the school and have no cause for complaint because the school has very high expectations of their children. Communication with parents is very good and they are provided with very detailed reports on their children's progress and informative newsletters on the work covered in school. Parents are invited to workshops relating to curriculum matters and particularly appreciated last year's art exhibition and this year's music workshops, especially the Zimbabwean musicians.
24. The school makes very good arrangements to ensure that the youngest children have a very effective start in the school. Parents attend induction meetings and receive very good, clear information about daily school routines. Parents value these opportunities as well as the consultation evenings, when they and teachers discuss each child's progress. Parents find their children's reports very clear and informative, with clear targets for improvement. The OFSTED parents' questionnaire returns showed a very high level of satisfaction with the work of the school and in particular with the school's relationships with parents. They felt that information about curriculum, progress and special educational needs was communicated well. Parents reported that their children are very happy in the school and that all staff are very dedicated to the children in their care. Since the previous inspection, parents reported that the school has maintained its very good provision and pupils are very well cared for, including higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Parents are particularly pleased with the very strong Catholic ethos that permeates all aspects of school life. Present inspection findings report that the school has maintained its very high standards.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in ICT across the school are below national expectations as, whilst pupils' achievements are good, the lack of an ICT suite inhibits pupils from making even better progress.

25. Since the previous inspection, the school has addressed very well the key issue of ICT resourcing and has purchased more computers. However, as many pupils do not have access to a computer at home, they need even more opportunities for reinforcing their learning and an ICT suite, where whole-class teaching of ICT skills takes place, could remedy this. Staff do very well in lessons to improve pupils' ICT skills, but there is only so much that can be done using two computers in class. However, ICT is satisfactorily used to support learning. There is evidence of pupils at the end of Year 2 being able to gather information from a variety of sources, word process their work, program a floor turtle and exchange and share information. However, their skills of using databases, control and modelling are less well developed.
26. By the end of Year 6, pupils can use a simple database, change font size, use "spell-checker", produce simple graphs and use the Internet for resources, highlight copy and paste into word documents for editing and presenting data. However, not all pupils are secure in their knowledge of graphical modelling, using complex searches and copying a variety of formulae to create tables or results. For example, insufficient depth of study has been undertaken on producing simple processes to turn on lights and sound alarms and develop a system in response to conditions. Pupils achieve in relation to their prior attainment and teachers and staff have undertaken appropriate ICT training. The use of the ICT support worker, funded by the Education Action Zone, has contributed a lot to raising standards. The school has recognised the need for an ICT suite and plans are underway to establish one.

The role of the subject co-ordinators in science, ICT and all foundation subject; whole school planning; target setting for individual pupils.

27. A very effective start has been made by the co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy in monitoring teaching, learning and standards in their subjects. This good practice now needs to be extended to science, ICT and all foundation subjects so that all co-ordinators can be fully involved in monitoring standards in their subjects, other than looking at teachers' planning, going through pupils' work and informally talking about standards in their subjects. Now that the school has examples of effective monitoring undertaken in literacy and numeracy, this expertise can be shared with other members of staff so that they can further develop their personal skills in improving standards. The school has recognised this as an area for development and is introducing a programme of support to develop the co-ordinators' roles even further.
28. Overall, teachers' planning is very good, but at present the staff's medium- and short-term plans have individual formats. It is quite difficult for new and less experienced co-ordinators to quickly pick out how subject-specific skills are identified. Further work identifying what has been previously covered is difficult when trawling through individualised planning. The school has rightly focused on developing very effective planning for literacy and numeracy and now needs to develop this good practice to other areas of the curriculum.
29. Individual target setting could be introduced in order to help pupils work on aspects of their academic performance. The school has a lot of well detailed assessments on their pupils, which could be developed further to help pupils make even better gains in learning. Teachers use class targets very well but, as yet, this very good practice is not yet fully extended for identification of individual target setting for pupils in order to raise standards even further.
30. The school has made a very good job of developing group targets due to its very good assessment systems. Staff are now well placed to move this on one step further and develop rigorous individual targets in all subjects, so that rates of progress can improve even more throughout the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

31. To raise standards even further, the headteacher, staff and governors, together with the help of the local education authority, should:
 - (1) raise standards in ICT throughout the school by:

- purchasing more computers and developing the existing plans for an ICT suite; and
- ensuring that all aspects of the ICT programmes of study are taught in sufficient depth, especially the control and modelling aspects;

(Paragraphs 25, 26)

(2) develop the roles of subject co-ordinators in science, ICT and foundation subjects by:

- building on the effective practice developed by the headteacher and literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, who have undertaken very good monitoring of teaching and learning;
- ensuring that appropriate training is given to co-ordinators so that they can evaluate the standards that pupils attain and the quality of teaching and learning; and
- ensuring that co-ordinators work alongside class teachers to develop individual target setting for pupils and a common format for planning, which clearly defines knowledge and skills previously covered by pupils.

(Paragraphs: 27, 28, 29, 30)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	22
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	6

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	1	17	3	1	0	0	0
Percentage	5	77	14	5	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than four percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	210
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	55

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	46

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	10	19	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	17	19	18
	Total	27	29	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (79)	100 (79)	97 (88)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	17	18	17
	Total	27	28	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (76)	97 (82)	93 (88)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	10	15	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	10	10
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	23	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	92 (74)	92 (81)	96 (96)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	10	10
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	23	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	92 (74)	92 (81)	96 (96)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

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	202	0	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.3
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	116

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002
	£
Total income	57 611
Total expenditure	489 871
Expenditure per pupil	2 171
Balance brought forward from previous year	23 021
Balance carried forward to next year	24 280

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	210
Number of questionnaires returned	151

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	24	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	75	23	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.128%!	72	56	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	59	30	7	2	0
The teaching is good.	84	16	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	32	8	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	25	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	83	17	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	65	32	3	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	76	22	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74	24	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	30	5	2	1