

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

ST. PHILOMENA'S RC PREPARATORY SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

October 9th – 12th, 2006

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

St Philomena's RC Preparatory School

Full Name of the School	St Philomena's RC Preparatory School
DfES Number	881/6021
Registered Charity Number	298635
Address	Hadleigh Road, Frinton-on-Sea, Essex CO13 9HQ.
Telephone Number	01255 674492
Fax Number	01255 674459
Email Address	contactus@stphilomenas.com
Headteacher	Bernadette Buck
Chairman of Governors	Richard Whybrew
Age Range	3 - 11
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	9th – 12th October, 2006

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 The school was founded in 1926 by the order of the Sisters of Mercy. In 1987, when the sisters withdrew from the school, parents formed a board of governors and the school became a charitable trust. The school was originally located in a large detached house (Convent House) and in 1996 an adjoining house (Clover House) was purchased. Since the last inspection a further house (Jubilee House) has been purchased.
- 1.2 The school caters for boys and girls aged three to eleven. One hundred and thirty seven pupils attend the school. Seventeen children (8 boys, 9 girls) are in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). Thirty pupils (14 boys, 16 girls) are in Years 1 and 2 and ninety (44 boys, 46 girls) are in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are drawn from a wide area that includes the seaside towns of Clacton, Walton, Brightlingsea, and the surrounding villages.
- 1.3 The Catholic tradition established by the Sisters of Mercy remains. Governors and teachers seek to provide a caring family ethos in which to educate the 'whole child' for life. In order to achieve this aim the staff places emphasis on:
 - ensuring that the Christian ethos is at the centre of the school's work;
 - valuing all pupils;
 - fostering consideration and co-operation;
 - the provision of a broad curriculum which has a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy;
 - providing a stimulating learning environment;
 - meeting individual pupils' needs and developing their talents.
- 1.4 Children enter the Early Years provision and other points of entry without any form of selective assessment. Priority is given to applications from Catholic families and siblings are given precedence on the waiting list.
- 1.5 Pupils' average ability is above that of the national average and if the pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results in national tests will be above the average for all maintained primary schools. Of the 137 pupils, 28 are receiving support for their learning difficulties but no pupils have a statement of special educational needs. No pupils have a language other than English as their principal language. A small minority of pupils come from multi-ethnic backgrounds and a few for whom English is not their first language are still developing their skills in spoken English.
- 1.6 Some of the staff were at the school at the time of the last inspection. A significant change to the membership of the governing body has taken place.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Pupils enjoy a broad and interesting range of experiences which are well-suited to their aptitudes and needs. The experience provided strongly reflects the school's aims to educate the 'whole child' and to provide them with a good all-round education firmly rooted in the school's Roman Catholic tradition. The opportunities provided enable the pupils to have a rich and happy experience as well as reaching the intellectual, personal, physical and aesthetic standards required for them to enter the senior school of their choice. Outstanding provision is made for their personal and aesthetic development and considerable attention is paid to nurturing their physical development but not at the expense of a secure foundation in English and mathematics. Parents are very supportive of the range of experiences provided for their children.
- 2.2 The curriculum is effectively planned. An improvement since the last inspection is that the planning for science has been revised to follow the national curriculum more closely. The curriculum is well supported with schemes of work and teachers' specialist expertise in music, art and sport. The Foundation Stage curriculum is carefully planned with good attention paid to all six areas of learning, with emphasis on the development of children's literacy and numeracy. Careful oversight of the curriculum is undertaken by a member of the senior management team together with subject co-ordinators.
- 2.3 Teachers pay due attention to the skills particular to each subject but also to the essential skills of speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy. Through the school day pupils are given many opportunities to explain their ideas, and to discuss them and the views of others. Literacy skills are central to the curriculum and are well promoted. Whilst considerable attention is paid to numeracy, less attention is paid to the application of pupils' skills in numeracy to other areas of the curriculum. An Information and Communication Technology (ICT) suite has been added since the last inspection. Effective use of this new facility provides pupils with useful opportunities to develop their skills in this aspect of the curriculum.
- 2.4 In line with its values, the school is inclusive. Great attention is paid to ensuring that all pupils have opportunities to participate fully in all the school's activities. Good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties, both in lessons and on occasion during individual sessions with a specialist teacher. Their progress is monitored regularly. Helpful support is provided for the very few pupils for whom English is an additional language. More able pupils are suitably challenged, especially in Years 5 and 6 and this often results in these pupils achieving highly in their entry examinations to senior schools. Pupils the school has identified as talented have good opportunities to develop their talents especially in music. Careful attention is given to ensure that physical disability is no bar to participation in sport.
- 2.5 Preparation for the move to senior schools is thorough, especially the preparation for external examinations. Teachers know their pupils very well. This information is used effectively to help pupils and their parents in choosing their senior schools and meeting the necessary requirements.
- 2.6 Lessons are effectively complemented by a programme of extra-curricular activities that are extensive for a school of this size. Pupils speak highly of these activities which are well attended. Despite the inherent limitation posed by the school's site, the range of activities is wide and includes sport, drama, music, the natural world, and ICT. Regular visits to places of educational interest, for example to the Tower of London, and Colchester Zoo, as well as to France, enrich the curriculum.

- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 Pupils are generally well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects and activities and learn to use them effectively. Overall, pupils achieve good standards in relation to their abilities. In music, pupils attain high standards. They make good progress in English and mathematics and achieve good standards in relation to their abilities. The results of the national tests in Year 2 over the past three years show that standards overall in reading, writing and mathematics have been well above the national averages. In Year 6, standards in national tests have been well above the national averages in English and mathematics over the same period. Standards in science are satisfactory and results in the national tests in Year 6 reflect this. The revised science curriculum now ensures that the national curriculum is followed but the revisions that have been made have not yet had enough time to raise standards to the levels of those in English and mathematics.
- 2.9 By the end of the Foundation Stage, pupils have attained the nationally recommended levels for children of that age. As a result of the good quality teaching they receive, many have made good progress particularly in their communication, language and literacy, in their mathematical development, and in their personal social and emotional development.
- 2.10 When the pupils leave for the senior school of their choice, pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties have achieved well in all areas of the education provided by the school. They are good 'all-rounders', very much in line with the school's aims. Pupils are successful in national and regional competitions. The choir was runner up in BBC TV's Songs of Praise School Choir of the Year 2006 and reached the last six in 2004 and 2005. Pupils are successful in regional sporting events, for example in swimming and cross-country running.
- 2.11 Pupils effectively develop learning skills. They have very positive attitudes to their learning and work hard in response to the interesting lessons and the school's very positive ethos encourages pupils always to do their best. Pupils show considerable skills in speaking and listening. In lessons they listen very attentively to their teachers and to each other. They show confidence in arguing their point, for example in a discussion by older pupils about using animals for testing. Across the school, pupils read fluently for their ages. They write at length, accurately and fluently for a wide range of purposes and in an appropriate range of styles from newspaper reports to poetry.
- 2.12 Pupils attain good standards in numeracy. Pupils in Year 2 showed good skills in adding multiples of 10; in Year 6, pupils competently worked with fractions and decimals. The application of mathematical skills in other subjects is less evident than the application of literacy skills, but is satisfactory overall. Pupils develop competent skills in ICT, which are usefully employed in other subjects such as science.
- 2.13 Pupils settle quickly in lessons and activities and concentrate well. When talking to inspectors, pupils commented that the work they were given was 'hard enough' and that their teachers made it interesting. Pupils work well on their own. When given the opportunity pupils collaborate effectively, for example when they use ICT or when conducting a science experiment. Pupils enjoy explaining their ideas and are able to think for themselves. For example, a child in the Foundation Stage commented that an illustration in a book being read was a reflection and then explained how it worked.
- 2.14 Pupils successfully undertake research both at home and at school. In Year 4, pupils had found out about the wives of Henry VIII and in Year 6 they had searched through

newspapers to find examples of persuasive writing. Little evidence was seen of pupils taking notes.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.15 Throughout the school, the pupils demonstrate outstandingly well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The school's values pervade the whole of its work. The aim to develop all pupils' worth is very well met. The ethos is implicit throughout the school day with a spirit of tolerance and respect reflected in all the school's activities. The strengths reported on at the last inspection have been successfully maintained. Opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility have improved.
- 2.16 Teachers effectively build pupils' self esteem and knowledge of personal worth through valuing them as individuals. Common Roman Catholic religious beliefs underpin the life of the school. Pupils show concern and compassion for others. High quality assemblies provide excellent opportunities for pupils to reflect, give thanks and to celebrate each other's successes. A feature of the assemblies is the high quality singing which gives each assembly a real sense of occasion to which pupils respond well. Close links are made with themes being followed in religious education lessons; for example the whole school was considering the theme of invitations and how these could be used to foster relationships. At times, pupils reflect and to pray in the school's small chapel. The school's very caring and positive ethos successfully encourages pupils to acquire personal beliefs and values.
- 2.17 Pupils show a very well developed sense of what is right and wrong, not just in terms of obeying the rules but also in doing what is morally right. The school rules are based on the school's values. Printed notices alongside each classroom altar explain that 'difficulties are discussed, problems prayed about and solutions sought'. When talking to inspectors, older pupils showed that they understand these values and across the school pupils' behaviour and attitudes reflected them. Staff provide pupils with good role models in their relations with each other and with the pupils. A strong sense of community and warm relationships are strongly evident through the school.
- 2.18 Pupils show a strong degree of social awareness, which is evident from the youngest age. Children in the Foundation Stage are encouraged to take account of others in their daily routines, by taking turns and sharing resources. As pupils move through the school they are given responsibilities which they undertake conscientiously; for example they act as mentors to pupils new to the school. Although the school does not have a school council, pupils are encouraged to make their views known and due account is taken of the comments, for example their proposals to have hot meals at lunch time. Appropriate attention is given to developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a citizen.
- 2.19 Outstanding opportunities are provided for the development of pupils' aesthetic development through music, drama and art. Pupils are effectively encouraged to have a secure understanding and appreciation of their own culture as well as those of others. Regular visits to places of educational interest and participation in music festivals add considerably to pupils' cultural development. A considerable improvement since the last inspection is that more attention is paid to enabling pupils to learn of cultures that are different to their own. Pupils are currently learning about Japanese culture from a Japanese teacher who is spending several months in the school. They have learnt how to greet her and each other in the traditional Japanese manner. Pupils support children in Sierra Leone and the school has links with schools in Peru, South Africa, Australia and the United States.
- 2.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.21 The quality of teaching is mainly good, supporting pupils' good achievement and their success in examinations for entry to senior schools. Teaching in Years 3 to 6 is good and is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage enables children to make a good start to their education. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is not as consistent and fluctuates from being good to occasionally being unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved in the Foundation Stage and is more consistent in Years 3 to 6.
- 2.22 Most of the teaching encourages pupils to make the most of their intellectual, physical and creative talents. Pupils are given useful opportunities to think for themselves and to increase their understanding. A particular strength is the way teachers and other staff want their pupils to do well and, through their very good relationships with pupils, create an atmosphere of industry which leads in turn to significant learning. Teachers are hardworking and generally have a secure command of the subjects they teach. In the Foundation Stage, teachers have a good understanding of the needs of young children and of the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. In science, the quality of teaching is uneven, partly due to teachers' individual expertise, for example in promoting pupils' investigative skills.
- 2.23 Lessons are conscientiously planned. Teachers know their pupils very well and effectively respond to pupils' different levels of attainment and learning needs. Teachers make clear at the start of the lesson what it is pupils are to learn. At the end of most lessons, teachers provide appropriate opportunities to sum up how the lesson has gone. Teachers hold very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the very good behaviour in the school is regarded by teachers and pupils alike as the norm.
- 2.24 Comprehensive support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties, both in lessons where classroom assistants are deployed to good effect, and through support from a specialist teacher. Appropriate support is provided for the very few pupils who are still developing fluency in spoken English. In most of the teaching, good attention is paid to the needs of pupils the school has identified as being more able. Teachers know their pupils very well and often carefully pitch the work to provide sufficient challenge for the more able whilst enabling the remainder of the class to play a full part. More able pupils do particularly well when teachers pose open-ended questions such as 'What makes you think that?' or 'Explain your thinking'. In these successful lessons, ideas formulated by the pupils are picked up by teachers and used to good effect.
- 2.25 The pace in most lessons is brisk and effective use is made of time; pupils make good progress as a consequence. In the strong teaching, the pace is very brisk, and a stimulating range of activities maintains pupils' interest. For example, in a good science lesson in Year 6, effective use of an interactive whiteboard enabled pupils to view materials magnified many times before the pupils made predictions about their solubility. In a successful lesson in Year 5, pupils worked assiduously to write poetry using the style of the poet they were studying.
- 2.26 Where teaching is lacklustre, but satisfactory, the tasks are routine but do not always capture the pupils' interest as they do in the successful teaching. Although the introductions to lessons are often effective, the over-reliance on completing worksheets lessens the impact on pupils' learning. At times, an over emphasis on teacher talk at the expense of pupil activity hinders pupils' learning. More able pupils are not always provided with sufficient challenge. In the very few instances of unsatisfactory teaching, the lack of pace and challenge in the lessons did not lead to progress in pupils' learning.

- 2.27 All teaching is supported by an adequate quality, quantity and range of resources. Nearly all of the lessons make effective use of resources. This helps to engage the interest of the pupils. In an excellent lesson in Year 6, very effective use of the school's only interactive whiteboard, enabled pupils to make very good progress in consolidating their understanding of how to calculate area. Plans are advanced to purchase further interactive boards.
- 2.28 Teachers regularly and thoroughly assess their pupils' work. Arrangements to assess pupils' standards of attainment in all areas of the curriculum have improved since the last inspection. In the Foundation Stage, effective use is made of the national Foundation Stage Profile. Across the school a wide range of assessments is used, including the nationally standardised tests in English and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6 to compare pupils' attainment against national norms. Effective use is made of this information to plan the curriculum, for example, analysis of pupils' performance in the national tests in science in Year 6 has led to the curriculum being revised.
- 2.29 The systems for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school are too dependent on teachers' very good knowledge of their individual pupils rather than on brief systematic records. Written comments in the marking are mainly limited to praise and encouragement. In conversations with pupils, it is clear that advice about improvement is often given together with a target for improvement. No systematic recording of such information is in place and the tracking of progress relies too heavily on the memories of individual teachers.
- 2.30 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The care that staff give to the wellbeing of the pupils is good and has successfully built on the provision reported at the last inspection. Very conscientious attention is paid to welfare, health and safety. Staff know their pupils very well. Very good relationships between adults and pupils in a school that lives its values ensure that pupils are well cared for.
- 3.2 The school is successful in its aim to educate the 'whole child' by ensuring that pupils learn in a caring and supportive environment. Parents are very appreciative of this. Pupils take care to support each other, for example when they have a minor accident in the playground. In conversations with inspectors, pupils spoke well of the school and were proud of it. They commented that the school was very caring and friendly. 'Teachers never ignore you' commented one pupil. Support for pupils new to the school was seen by a good number of pupils as an example of the caring nature of the school.
- 3.3 Central to the success of the school is the ethos drawn from its Roman Catholic traditions. The very positive atmosphere also owes much to the leadership of the headteacher who has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the pupils, together with the effective leadership of the senior management team who ensure that the policies and procedures for pupils' pastoral care are properly implemented. The staff are familiar with the school's policies and procedures and also have a detailed knowledge of each pupil. However the lack of systematic recording of pupils' progress (noted in 2.29) means that support and guidance is not always as effective as it might be.
- 3.4 Effective arrangements are in place and implemented to promote good behaviour. They are known and respected by the pupils who regard them as being fair: 'They are for our own benefit' commented an older pupil. Thorough and conscientious attention is paid to the prevention of bullying. The anti-bullying policy is clear and is implemented very effectively. Again, policy is drawn from the school's values; for example a printed sheet in classrooms states that 'Forgiveness will be both spontaneous and generous'. Pupils readily indicated that they would be willing to confide in an adult should they be experiencing difficulties. The pupils showed that they were familiar with the school's procedures and what to do if they had concerns.
- 3.5 Successful arrangements are in place and effectively implemented to safeguard and promote pupils' health and wellbeing. Good attention is paid to keeping pupils safe. Attendance registers are completed correctly and should a pupil be absent without an explanation, prompt checks are made.
- 3.6 Very conscientious attention is given to child protection. This area has improved since the last inspection. The child protection officer is knowledgeable and has received the necessary training. The policy is up-to-date and implemented consistently. Criminal Records Bureau checks have been made on staff and are central to the school's recruitment arrangements. Staff have received the necessary training and child protection is an element of the induction of staff new to the school. A governor is designated to have oversight of child protection.
- 3.7 Emphasis is placed on healthy living. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily. Plans for the future indicate that the provision of hot meals is on the agenda for improvements to be made. One day a week is designated as 'Walk to School Day' where parents and pupils are encouraged to walk at least part of the way to school.

- 3.8 Fire protection is thorough and all appliances and evacuation procedures are regularly tested. Fire risk assessments are up-to-date. Effective use of a consultant ensures that secure arrangements are in place to ensure health and safety. First aid is well provided for. Thorough risk assessments are made for educational visits and appropriately within the school.
- 3.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.10 The school has an effective partnership with parents who are very supportive of the school's aims and value the useful links they have with the school. The school has maintained its useful links with the local community and strengthened those with the wider community. The links the school has with parents and the community benefit the pupils.
- 3.11 In their replies to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, parents showed their particular appreciation of the attitudes and values promoted, the teaching, standards of behaviour and of the extra-curricular activities. Inspection findings confirm parents' positive views of the school.
- 3.12 Useful opportunities are provided for the involvement of parents in the life of the school. Effective use is made of parents' individual skills in the curriculum. For example a farrier and a dentist have spent time in school with pupils as part of the themes pupils were studying. Parents are encouraged to help with visits to places of educational interest and with sporting fixtures. Although the school does not have a formal parents' association, all parents have opportunities to be involved in fund raising events. The money raised from these events is used to benefit the pupils, a recent example being the purchase of an interactive whiteboard.
- 3.13 Parents are provided with a wide range of helpful information which keeps them well informed. Regular newsletters, an informative prospectus and starter packs provide a useful insight into school life and encourage parents to feel part of the school. This is an improvement as at the time of the last inspection a significant minority of parents felt that information could be improved. In the Foundation Stage, parents are kept well informed of their child's progress and parents often meet informally with staff at the beginning and end of each session. Each term the school encourages parents to have a 'no TV week' and to spend the time reading and playing games with their children.
- 3.14 Regular reports are sent to all parents who acknowledge them as being helpful and informative. At times, the reports' description of the work covered by pupils is at the expense of judgements about progress and what pupils need to do to improve their performance. Parents of pupils with learning difficulties are kept well informed and their views sought.
- 3.15 The small number of parental concerns are handled with due care. The vast majority of parents who completed the questionnaire indicated that the school had handled any concerns well. Parents have access to an appropriate complaints procedure. The headteacher and teachers are approachable and accessible, creating an atmosphere in which parents are made to feel welcome.
- 3.16 The school has a good number of close links with the local community and with the parish. Effective links have been established with local schools and colleges. A number of more able pupils attend sessions at Tendring Technology College in the Easter holiday. The pupils

also benefit from links with the College in ICT and in design and technology. Older pupils participate in Primary Liaison Curriculum days at St Benedict's RC College, Colchester and benefit from their Business Enterprise expertise, for example in setting up Fair Trade sales teams for pupils. The school participates in local schools sporting events and tournaments. A number of local and national charities are supported. Links have been established with schools in South Africa, Peru, Australia and the United States. The range and extent of links with the community contribute significantly to pupils' all round personal development.

- 3.17 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Since the last inspection, the governing body has undergone a significant change in membership and more recently, in structure. The pupils at St Philomena's benefit from a good quality education sustained by suitable governance.
- 4.2 With a new Chairman of governors, a well-founded change of structure with more committees has been established. In making these changes, due account has been taken of general advice from the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools. These committees now have agreed terms of reference and are well placed to undertake their responsibilities effectively, and their oversight of the school. The governors are very supportive of the school as reported at the last inspection. All Governors either have been parents or are parents, reflecting the change in 1987 when parents took over from the Sisters of Mercy and established a charitable trust. Consequently many of them have good personal insights into the working of the school. The compliance committee ensures that the school meets its legal and regulatory requirements.
- 4.3 Prudent financial planning ensures the school is on a sound footing and has enabled the accommodation to be improved since the last inspection with the purchase of Jubilee House. Although governors have a sound understanding of the school and its future educational direction, they have not yet expressed this in a succinct strategic plan with clear success criteria and specific budgets attached to named developments.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 Leadership and management by the senior management team are strong. Effective leadership ensures that the school provides its pupils with an education firmly based on the school's values and its aim to educate the whole child. The success of the leadership is seen in the pupils' outstanding personal development and in the good standards pupils achieve. The headteacher and senior management team (SMT) clearly promote the school's aims and this is evident from the positive ethos that pervades the school.
- 4.5 The headteacher is committed to the highest personal attainment of each pupil. The SMT holds high expectations for staff and pupils. 'Each pupil has an intrinsic worth' is the declared maxim that guides their work. The SMT has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require improvement. Partly this is due to informal arrangements that work well in a school of this size but also to the regular scrutiny of pupils' completed work. Management is now better focussed since the last inspection where too much reliance was placed on informal arrangements. The management of support for those with learning difficulties is particularly effective.
- 4.6 The role of the subject co-ordinators has been developed satisfactorily since the last inspection. Together with the SMT, co-ordinators scrutinise pupils' completed work and identify areas in their subjects where improvements could be made. The school has identified that their role in subject leadership could be extended further and this improvement is included in the school's future plans. However, the current school development plan is limited in scope. It identifies a number of basic priorities but provides no clear success criteria or timescales. These omissions hinder its effectiveness. The plan does not form a secure basis on which the headteacher and governors can effectively base the strategic development of the school.

- 4.7 Staff development has also improved since the last inspection. The planned developments to the curriculum and to promote pupils' welfare have been supported by training both inside the school and by attendance at courses further afield. Useful arrangements are in place to induct staff new to the school. A teacher who completed her first year of teaching in the school reports that the induction for a newly qualified teacher was very helpful. Teacher appraisal is in place. Although the headteacher has a detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching across the school, the effectiveness of the appraisal arrangements is lessened by the absence of systematic formal observation of teaching.
- 4.8 The prudent management of finances by the governors ensures that resources are sufficient for the curriculum and that the accommodation is in a good state of repair and decoration. Well-organised displays of pupils' completed work add considerably to the learning environment. The routine administration is efficient and the school runs smoothly.
- 4.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.10 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school is successful in its aim to educate the 'whole child' in the spirit of its Roman Catholic heritage. The provision made for pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is outstanding. Pastoral care is good and an interesting educational experience, together with good teaching, provide an environment in which pupils are happy and are good 'all rounders'.
- 5.2 Standards in music are high. Levels of achievement in English and mathematics are good. Achievement in science is satisfactory rather than good, partly due to the revised planning not having had time to make a significant impact and to the uneven quality of the teaching of the subject. Pupils are successful in the creative aspects of the curriculum and in sport. Pupils speak well of their school and are proud to be members of it.
- 5.3 The headteacher is totally committed to the wellbeing of the pupils who she knows very well. Better dispersed leadership is effectively exercised. The work of the subject co-ordinators has improved since the last inspection and further development is planned for their subject leadership. The governance of the school is satisfactory. The governing body is much better placed to provide more effective oversight since their relatively recent restructuring.
- 5.4 The strategic plan for the development of the school lacks sufficient detail regarding success criteria, milestones and budgets. The assessment arrangements have improved but more needs to be done to put into place effective and efficient systems to track individual pupil's progress as they move through the school.
- 5.5 Since the last inspection significant improvement has been made. The strengths have been maintained. A specialist area for the teaching of science has been established, resources have been improved, including an ICT suite, and planned staff development is now taking place. The school continues to meet its regulatory requirements.
- 5.6 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.7 In order to build on the improvement since the last inspection and to continue to provide an all round education, the school should:
1. draw up a clear plan for the strategic development of the school in which explicit timescales, success criteria and budget requirements are detailed;
 2. establish efficient systems to make effective use of the information from assessment to track pupils' progress from the Foundation Stage to Year 6;
 3. develop teachers' expertise in the investigative skills in science.
- 5.8 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 9th October to 12th October, 2006. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

R Sharman	Reporting Inspector
J Norona	Former Head, ISA school
A Potts	Head, ISA school