

INSPECTION REPORT

Holy Trinity CofE Primary School
West Bromwich

Sandwell

Unique Reference Number : 103986

Headteacher : Mrs Helen Gilbert

Reporting inspector : Chris Rhodes
16408

Dates of inspection : 8 – 11 November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 706691

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Primary
Type of control :	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils :	3 - 11
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
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Appropriate authority :	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mr Colin Lucock
Date of previous inspection :	20 – 24 May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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Deborah Manley, Lay Inspector		Attitudes and behaviour; Attendance; Support, guidance and pupil welfare; Parents and the community; Staffing, accommodation and resources
Mike Duggan	English, Design and technology, Physical education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; Efficiency
Cathy Gordon-Smith	Science; Art; Music; Children under five.	
Robert Bissell	Information technology; Geography; Special educational needs; Equal opportunities	Curriculum and assessment;

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

The Headteacher, Governing Body and senior staff have a very clear understanding of what the school needs to achieve. Their leadership and management are very good.
The school is very successful in implementing its overall aims, values and policies
The ethos is very strong
Standards are rising and progress is good
The overall standard of teaching is good
The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good
Behaviour is good
Relationships within the school are very strong
The arrangements to support and guide pupils are very well organised
The provision for personal and social development is very good
Financial planning and school administration are very efficient
The school gives good value for money

Where the school has weaknesses

Day-to-day assessment is not used enough to measure pupil success and as the basis for planning later lessons
Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, and in science throughout the school, although improving considerably, are still below national averages. Higher attaining pupils are not always set work that really challenges them in both key stages
Although pupils are developing their IT skills well, these are not applied enough in other curricular areas.

The weaknesses are far outweighed by what the school does well, but will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has successfully overcome nearly all of the weaknesses pointed out in the last inspection in 1996, and is much better than it was. The standard of pupils' speaking and listening has risen and concerns about standards in information technology, history and art have been addressed successfully. The role of the subject co-ordinator has been developed effectively and is having a positive impact on standards. The accommodation has been extended, the standard of teaching has risen, pupils have far more opportunities to show initiative, and the new homework policy is proving effective and is welcomed by parents. Standards of behaviour and pupils' attitudes to school and learning have improved. Work remains to be done to raise standards still further and to reflect the new national guidance on the curriculum within the school's documentation. The school has set, and achieved, realistic targets for pupil success. It is very well placed to make further improvements and to meet its increased targets.

Standards in subjects

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	<p>A B C D E</p>
English	C	A	
Mathematics	D	B	
Science	E	D	

The information shows, for example, that while standards in English are in line with all schools, they are well above average when compared to similar schools. The percentage of pupils reaching national targets rose considerably in all three subjects. The percentage of pupils attaining level 4 was almost double that reached in 1998 in English, and has risen in mathematics from 16% in 1997 to 27% in 1998, and to 61% in 1999. The percentage reaching level 4 in science rose from 38% in 1998 to 61% in 1999 but still remains well below the national average. This continued progress is encouraging.

Overall standards of attainment on entry to the Nursery and reception classes are below average. Children under five make good and, in some aspects, very good progress, especially in the Nursery. Children who begin school unable to communicate verbally make rapid progress in learning to express themselves in English. The standards of attainment seen in English and mathematics lessons and in children's books during the inspection are below the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 but are in line with expected levels by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress is sound in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Standards in science are below national expectations at the end of both key stages. Progress is satisfactory. Standards in information technology and religious education are in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages and progress is sound in religious education and good in information technology. Progress in all other subjects is sound. Higher attaining pupils are not always set work at the correct level and opportunities for greater progress are limited.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in:	Under 5	5 - 7 years	7 - 11 years
English	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Sound	Good
Science		Good	Good
Information technology		Good	Good
Religious education		Good	Sound
Other subjects	Good	Sound	Sound

In 15% of lessons the teaching was very good or excellent. It was good in a further 40% and satisfactory in 45%. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The overall standard of teaching was equally strong in all three age bands.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good. Pupils behave well in and around the school. Their ability to work collaboratively and independently increases steadily as they grow older.
Attendance	Not as good as the national average, and a continuing concern to the school.
Ethos*	Very strong. A positive climate for learning is evident in all classes. Pupils' work is valued in the many attractive displays and in achievement assemblies. Relationships are very strong.
Leadership and management	The Headteacher leads very effectively, strongly supported by the Governing Body and senior staff. Subjects are well managed. Development planning is strong.
Curriculum	Broad and balanced. It is particularly well planned for children under five. Day-to-day assessment is not used rigorously enough to record pupil attainment or as the basis for short-term planning.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good. Overall progress is good, especially when pupils are taught in small groups or are supported by additional staff.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Overall good provision. Arrangements for personal and social development are particularly good.
Staffing, accommodation and resources	All staff are appropriately qualified. Support staff, including the caretaker and secretary are key members of the school team. The new accommodation for Key Stage 1 is very good, but concerns remain about the size of some teaching areas in Key Stage 2 and in the Nursery. Resources are sufficient overall. The new ICT suite is a definite asset.
Value for money	Good.

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easy to approach with questions or problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children are very happy • Parents are well informed about children's progress • Parents are given a clear understanding of the curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children achieve good standards 	

The inspectors agreed with the parents' very positive views of the school. Five parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. Some concern was expressed about the absence of a Spring meeting between parents and the teaching staff. These meetings do, in fact, take place.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The Headteacher, Governing Body and staff should continue to work together to raise standards in all areas of the curriculum by

Extending the use of day-to-day assessment by

- using the learning objectives to measure the progress made by different groups within the lesson (Paragraphs 23, 33, 34, 77)
- ensuring that this information is always used as the basis for daily and future planning (Paragraphs 23, 33, 34, 77, 84, 88)

Raising the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the core subjects, still further by

- continuing to use the strengths within the national literacy and numeracy strategies to raise standards in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1, and in science in both key stages (Paragraph 22)
- ensuring that the rigour seen in many literacy and numeracy lessons is spread to all subjects so that tasks challenge pupils of all abilities, especially those capable of higher attainment (Paragraph 22, 23, 29, 87, 88)
- ensuring that lesson objectives are always explained to children in terms of what they will have learned rather than as what they will have done (Paragraph 29)
- continuing the regular monitoring and evaluation of standards by the Headteacher and senior staff (Paragraph 47)

Taking advantage of the new Information and Communication Technology [ICT] suite to raise standards in all subjects by

- making sure that pupils' Information Technology [IT] skills are developed in all areas of the curriculum (Paragraph 84, 97)
- including appropriate references to the use of IT in all subject schemes of work (Paragraph 97)
- ensuring that IT skills training remains an important part of the school's professional development programme (Paragraph 97)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- The restricted size of many classrooms in Key Stage 2 limits the range of practical activities possible.
- Attendance is lower than the national average
- The library does not contain enough books for the current needs of the school

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School is situated in West Bromwich, in the Borough of Sandwell in the West Midlands. It is a voluntary controlled school with 280 pupils on roll, and is broadly average in size for a school of this type. Most children come from the local area, central West Bromwich, which shows many of the features of urban deprivation. 39% of pupils are entitled to free meals, which is above the national average. 31% of the children are on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs, and one pupil has a Statement indicating where specific extra help is required. 65% of pupils are members of families that originally came from India or Pakistan, 14% are Afro-Caribbean and 15% are white. Over half the children come from homes where English is not the first language, and 45 pupils receive additional support. These percentages are very high when compared to the national average. The main languages other than English are Punjabi and Urdu. The nursery contains 46 children, who attend part-time from the month following their third birthdays. 19 of the children come from homes where English is not the first language. Two pupils are on the school's special educational needs register. Attainment on entry to the nursery is well below national expectations, and to full time education in the reception classes, is below the national expectation. There have been no exclusions.

The previous inspection report said that standards should be higher and that the management and efficiency of the school needed to be improved. It also said that the overall quality of education and the climate for learning provided by the school were good. The school has carried out a rigorous analysis of its current position and has set out very clear objectives for continued success in its Improvement Plan. It is determined to raise standards of literacy, numeracy, science and Information and Communication Technology [ICT] for all pupils, to improve the quality of teaching and develop the role of governors and subject leaders. The learning environment is being improved through the provision of additional accommodation to reduce class size in Key Stage 2 and to provide permanent accommodation for smaller classes in Key Stage 1. Targets for all areas are very challenging, but are realistic and achievable

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	15	24	39

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	10	10	12
	Girls	19	19	20
	Total	29	29	32
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	74	74	82
	National	80	81	84

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	10	12	13
	Girls	19	18	16
	Total	29	30	29
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	74	77	74
	National	81	85	86

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	15
Satisfactory or better	100
Less than satisfactory	0

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 2²

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	18	19	37

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	15(4)	13(5)	12(9)
	Girls	11(10)	10(5)	11(5)
	Total	26(14)	23(10)	23(14)
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	71(38)	61(27)	61(38)
	National	65	59	69

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	13(4)	14(5)	10(9)
	Girls	10(10)	11(5)	12(5)
	Total	23(14)	25(10)	22(14)
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	62(38)	68(27)	59(38)
	National	65	65	72

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year			%
Authorised	School		6.7
	National comparative data		5.7
Unauthorised	School		0.3
	National comparative data		0.5

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
Fixed period		0
Permanent		0

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

The percentage of children reaching the national targets for reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999, while remaining below the national average, has been rising steadily since 1997. The school exceeded its own targets in all three areas, and by 10% in writing and mathematics. The 1999 test results are in line with those reached in similar schools. The rise in the percentage of pupils reaching the national targets for English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 is impressive. The percentage of pupils reaching the expected level 4 in English was approximately double that obtained in each of the previous two years. The 1999 English results were in line with all schools, and well above those reached in similar schools. This is a very important achievement. Very good progress can be seen, especially in mathematics where the percentage reaching level 4 has risen from 16% in 1997, and 27% in 1998, to 61% in 1999. Mathematics results, while below the average for all schools, are above average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils reaching level 4 in science rose from 38% in 1998 to 61% in 1999, but is still well below the national average for all schools and below average for similar schools. The impact of the school's increased sense of purpose, strong leadership, the successful implementation of the literacy strategy and the contribution of new staff, can all be seen in these improved results.

Overall standards of attainment on entry to the Nursery are below average. Many children find language and self-expression very difficult. English is an additional language for a significant proportion. Many have little experience of number or creative activities, or of social interaction. Children's work on entry indicates that they have had little opportunity to practise using crayons, paints or pencils. The progress made by children under five is good and, in some aspects, is very good, especially in the Nursery. Children, who begin school unable to communicate verbally make rapid progress in learning to express themselves in English and settle into school routines quickly. They are very well prepared to start work on the National Curriculum in the term following their fifth birthday.

The standards of attainment seen in English and mathematics lessons and in children's books during the inspection are below the national average at the end of Key Stage 1, but have risen to be in line with expected levels by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress is sound in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Standards in science are below the national expectation at the end of both key stages. Progress is satisfactory. Standards in information technology and religious education are in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages and progress is sound in religious education and good in information technology. Progress in all other subjects is sound. When compared with the standards reported for Key Stage 1 during the previous inspection, attainment is now higher in speaking and listening, but is below previous levels in aspects of writing and number. In Key Stage 2, standards are higher in speaking and listening, in mathematics as a whole and in information technology. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress while under five and in both key stages. They make particularly good progress in literacy and numeracy lessons where the level of work is carefully matched to their ability. There are no significant differences between boys and girls. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress in all subjects.

Pupils start full-time education with a limited range of language skills and experiences, but make good progress. Standards in speaking and listening are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils can explain their work, give reasons for the school rules and describe a favourite character from a reading book. They can re-tell stories and take part in imaginative play. They also make good progress through the regular discussion times at the ends of lessons and in the occasional 'Circle Time' sessions. Pupils continue

to make good progress in Key Stage 2. They read aloud confidently and enact a story, as well as sharing ideas about characters and places, as seen when Year 5 pupils analysed 'The Adventures of Isabel'. Older pupils do not have enough opportunities for independent discussion and formal debate. Pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language make good progress with the support of specialist teachers and in relation to their individual education plans.

Reading is strongly promoted by the school and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. They are particularly well supported by the high quality home/school liaison reading system. Standards are in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils read a selection of literature during the literacy hour, express their opinions about stories that they have read, and use a wide range of strategies when reading independently. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils read competently both for pleasure and to obtain information. They read a wide range of literature with their teachers that include modern poets and classical works. The higher attaining pupils select challenging books for independent reading. They can find a book in the library on a given subject, use an index and contents page appropriately, and skim the text to locate specific information. They benefit from group reading sessions, and can discuss plot and characterisation fluently. In Year 6 they understand the use of figurative language, recognising, for instance, that 'there's daggers in men's smiles' is a reference to treachery.

At Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress with their writing skills but standards do not match the national expectation. By the end of the key stage they are beginning to write in different forms, such as recipes for different menus and the story of 'The Turtle who danced with Crane'. They use imaginative vocabulary when writing an account of 'Their way home' and many are beginning to set out sentences correctly. The focused and systematic teaching of the literacy programme is evident in examples of extended writing. Spelling skills are developed progressively. Although pupils' handwriting is usually neat and well-formed, few of them use joined script in their everyday writing. Punctuation is more accurate by the end of the key stage and words are often chosen carefully, especially by higher attaining pupils. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils write for a range of purposes and readers. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand the use of tenses, adjectives and synonyms. The skills of dialogue and paragraphing are steadily developed in Years 5 and 6. They have opportunities to improve their work by drafting, editing, proof-reading and then presenting the final form. The quality of creative writing, though limited in quantity, is frequently high, especially in Years 4 and 6, and reflects the depth of pupils' reading experience. Pupils learn banks of words to spell correctly and are now developing legible handwriting in a cursive, flowing style using ink.

Current standards of attainment in pupils' mathematics books and lessons are below average at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils work confidently with money up to 20 pence, using their heads to work out what they could afford to buy in a toy shop, but many need to count each of the spots on a dice to see that $5+3+4=12$. Higher attaining pupils work with greater understanding and are able to handle larger numbers up to 100. All pupils are familiar with graphs and can explain how these record their different shoe sizes and heights. They have some understanding of how to measure length and weight, and know the names of common two-dimensional shapes. They know how to use their mathematical knowledge in practical situations. Progress within the key stage is sound. Younger children build effectively on the knowledge gained in the Nursery and reception classes. They count confidently, add and subtract to 10, and higher attaining pupils work easily with numbers to 20.

Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with national averages and have improved since the previous inspection, especially in mental arithmetic. Most pupils can multiply and divide by 100, work in decimals, explain simple fractions and percentages, and use their knowledge to carry out mathematical investigations. They understand co-ordinates, can explain line and block graphs, and that the probability of a coin coming down heads or tails is equal. Pupils have a secure knowledge of shape. Higher attaining pupils can work with numbers to 1000, explain negative numbers, and multiply and divide decimals to two places. Progress is good in Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 3 have a good understanding of the basic

multiplication tables and processes. They remember what they have learned and use their knowledge with increasing confidence. Higher attaining pupils make good progress when they are challenged by the materials and encouraged to think mathematically. Pupils in all classes ask questions to check their understanding and higher attaining pupils, in particular, increase their progress rate as they learn to correct their own answers. Progress is less evident if the tasks are initially challenging but become repetitive.

Literacy is being developed effectively through the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. Standards are similar to those found in most schools and progress is good. Pupils' literacy skills are being constantly improved through other subjects, for example, the importance of listening to and carrying out of instructions in physical education, in writing up a science investigation correctly and compiling a newspaper, 'The Roman Times', in history. Numeracy is also used effectively in other areas of the curriculum. Children use their knowledge of mathematical co-ordinates in geographical map work, and measure accurately in science and design and technology. Good links are made to art in Key Stage 1 when children developed their understanding of Kandinsky's geometric paintings by using their mathematical knowledge of two-dimensional shapes.

Pupils' attainment in information technology is in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are able to access programmes of their choice and are competent at saving their work and retrieving information. Year 2 pupils select a variety of painting tools to create straight line shapes and colour their designs. They demonstrate their skills in directing a programmable robot to follow a route that they have drawn onto a treasure island map. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are using word processing programmes with a good degree of understanding and are able to enter information onto a spreadsheet to produce graphs and charts. Pupils in Year 6 are confident in moving pictures and written information between programmes in order to build up a presentation to which they will add sounds and information from the Internet. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in both key stages.

Standards in religious education at the end of both key stages are in line with the requirements of the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus. The curriculum follows a two-year cycle, and pupils have regular opportunities to learn about the major festivals and key elements of the Christian faith. They learn about other major world faiths through the study of Sikhism and Judaism. Pupils in Year 2 have learned about Diwali as a major festival of light and the school decorated the hall with colourful candles. They have learned about the robes worn by the Vicar and that the colours reflect the various festivals within the Christian year. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 have studied signs and symbols in great depth. They can describe each of the five symbols of Sikhism, giving them the correct names, know that the lotus flower is important to Buddhists, and understand the importance of the Seder plate to Jews at the time of Passover. Some are confused about the difference between the crucifix and the empty cross for Christians. They have a good recall of the events of Easter and know why it was remarkable that a Samaritan helped a Jew in the parable. Progress is sound in all lessons, but higher attaining pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, are not given enough opportunities to explore or research the subject material in greater depth. This limits their progress.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

Children under five are happy and well behaved in school. They have a very positive approach to all the planned activities and make good progress. Their personal development is very well promoted. From the beginning of their time in the Nursery, they are given opportunities to make choices and decisions and to take some responsibility for themselves so that they can begin to become independent.

Pupils in all classes are usually interested and are often excited by their work. Their attention span and ability to work collaboratively and independently increase steadily through the school, and have improved since the previous inspection. They learn to listen carefully and interpret instructions correctly. Most make an effort to present their work neatly and enjoy learning. The new homework policy and home-school agreement signed this term underwrite this development. Pupils with special educational needs are equally positive in their response to lessons. They try hard, maintain their interest and enthusiasm, and are eager to answer questions. They are well accepted by other pupils.

Pupils behave well in and around the school. Even the youngest children show courtesy and care for adults and other children. Behaviour in lessons is generally good, and has improved since the previous inspection. Some younger pupils become restless at the end of long days or on the very rare occasions when the teaching lacks stimulus. Relationships in the school are very good at all levels, both within classes and between younger and older children, and between pupils and all staff in the school. The pupils are friendly and confident with visiting adults and members of the support staff. Examples of understanding and respect for others' feelings and values are evident in many lessons and in assemblies. Pupils are encouraged to understand the impact of their own actions on others. The quality of relationships within the school has strengthened considerably since the previous inspection and makes an important contribution to the overall ethos of the school. The level of racial harmony is very high.

A lack of opportunities for pupils to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning was noted in the previous report. The situation has greatly improved. Pupils now have many opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility. A good example was seen when Year 6 recorder players wanted to play in an assembly, and were given the responsibility to replan the music themselves so that they could play. This also required them to set up the tape and over-head projector. They carried out their task quickly, without fuss and very effectively. In addition to the traditional monitor roles and the good examples of collaborative work seen in lessons, older children help the younger children in the Nursery, and Key Stage 1 and 2 children organise their own PE equipment. Older pupils look after other children and show visitors around the school. They also help at dinner times, organise games at playtimes and read with younger children during wet playtimes. Insufficient opportunities are given in some lessons for higher attaining pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning by giving them opportunities to pursue their own lines of enquiry. However, pupils display their independent learning skills in the after-school history club with such great enthusiasm that the school is considering extending the entry age to younger pupils.

Attendance

The absence rate continues to be above the national average, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Unauthorised absence continues to be low. The high absence rate is, to some extent, accounted for by term time visits to the Indian sub-continent. Parents now tell the school that they are going, so the school can explain how this may affect their children's progress and attainment. The school also provides work packs for pupils to reduce the impact of such absences, but is well aware that this is no substitute for being in school. There have been no exclusions.

Staff have clear instructions about completing registers, following up unauthorised absences, pupils with attendance problems or those who are persistently late. The Deputy Headteacher checks registers each week and notes any issues. The Education Welfare Officer visits weekly. Registration periods in the morning and afternoon are quick and efficient, and registers are closed promptly and maintained correctly. There is some unpunctuality on the part of a small number of parents who do not get their children to school on time, despite the new home-school agreement. The school makes it quite clear to them that this is not satisfactory and harms the latecomers' education. Lessons and activities begin punctually.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. In 15% of lessons it was judged to be very good or excellent. It was good in a further 40% and sound in 45%. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection when 14% of lessons were judged unsatisfactory and only 4% were very good or excellent. The rigour required to teach the new literacy and numeracy strategies is also evident in the teaching in other subjects and is helping to raise standards.

The overall quality of teaching of children under five in the Nursery and reception classes is good. A third of the lessons were judged to be very good. Classrooms and activities are well organised and all staff have a secure understanding of the needs of young children. Activities are varied and interesting. Teachers and support staff work together as a strong team, and place a particular and effective emphasis on the development of spoken language. Careful records are made of children's progress and an appropriate stress is placed on their social development. Planning, preparation and assessment are all very good. The Nursery nurses teach groups of children alongside the Nursery teacher. Their work is consistently good.

The standards of good teaching are continued in Key Stage 1. Teachers build strong relationships with their classes, plan carefully and manage behaviour effectively. Several very good examples were seen when teachers maintained their high standards, in music and religious education for example, and continued to interest the children and to make them work hard even at the end of a tiring day. In the best lessons, children are told at the beginning what they will learn in the lesson and work is set at different levels, in mathematics for example, so that higher attaining pupils are challenged. Questions are asked skilfully to check understanding and make the children think hard. Teaching is less effective in the lessons where higher attaining children are not set work at an appropriate level or classrooms become too noisy.

The good standard is maintained in Key Stage 2. Teachers have created a positive climate for learning, and relationships are strong and based on mutual respect. In the best lessons teachers have a secure understanding of the subject material, explain the tasks clearly, use questions effectively, and work is well planned and structured. Specialist vocabulary is used correctly, lessons have pace as pupils know exactly how much time they have to complete the work, and their progress is carefully monitored so that later work can be planned on an understanding of what the children actually learned. The new ways to teach English and mathematics through the literacy and numeracy hours are used very effectively, give an increased sense of rigour to the learning and are having a positive impact on standards. Pupils enjoy learning in this way, as was seen for example, in all the quick fire mental mathematics sessions and in the animated discussions about the facts behind Duncan's death in Shakespeare's Macbeth. The concerns about a lack of opportunity for children to work independently have been largely addressed through the successful implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies, but higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough in other subjects. Teaching is less successful when explanations take too long or the teachers' own subject knowledge is insecure. In many lessons the short-term judgements on how well children are progressing lack focus or are incomplete. This makes it much harder to plan later work effectively.

Learning support teachers and other staff work very effectively with pupils in classrooms or specialist areas. They plan carefully with class teachers and make an important contribution to raising standards and to pupils' progress. Very good examples were seen, for example, in the Nursery, with older pupils in mathematics lessons and in science groups. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good, especially in group work. Teachers have high expectations of what the pupils will be able to achieve and plan carefully to meet individual needs. Good use is made of individual education plans in numeracy and literacy lessons. Teaching in whole class lessons gives special educational needs pupils' an equal opportunity to be successful when the tasks are carefully matched to their ability. The support provided by the school for pupils for whom English is an additional language is very good. Teachers plan lessons rich in vocabulary and their groups are joined by pupils with high order language skills who serve as a model. Pupils chosen for extra support each have a carefully structured individual language plan.

The curriculum and assessment

Curriculum provision for the under-fives is very good. Early Years planning includes references to the nationally agreed areas of learning and takes account of the desirable learning outcomes. A seamless transition from the Early Years into Key Stage 1 is achieved effectively building upon children's previous learning experiences. Extensive assessment procedures are in place, including baseline assessment, the results of which are used systematically to inform curriculum planning and support individual pupils.

The curriculum offered in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 meets statutory requirements. The school's curriculum is broad and covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Appropriate attention is given to subject content and sufficient emphasis is placed upon the relevant skills and processes in all aspects of the National Curriculum. Sufficient time is allocated to mathematics, English, science, religious education and information technology at both key stages. At Key Stage 2, additional time is allocated to writing groups and this is having a positive effect on raising levels of pupils' achievement.

Information technology is taught directly to pupils in specialist lessons at both key stages and considerable improvements in the development of pupils' skills have been made since the last inspection. Curriculum time given to art, geography, history and design technology, however, is below that taught in many schools at both key stages and is restricting pupils' development of skills in these subject areas.

Policies that reflect the school aims are in place for all subjects. Teachers have worked together successfully, under the effective guidance of the senior management team. The positive impact of this is already evident in improving standards of literacy and numeracy at both key stages. The previous inspection highlighted a need to further develop programmes of work and this is still the case in the foundation subjects of the curriculum. Teachers plan individually for half-termly topics of work, using national guidance from the schemes recently introduced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Planning by teachers is sound in English and mathematics but in other subjects of the curriculum there is a lack of consistency in teachers' learning objectives for lessons. These are not all written in a way that will develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding or help to identify pupils' progress within lessons. With the exception of planning for literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers' planning does not always identify a range of activities matched to the different abilities of pupils in the class. The arrangements for grouping pupils by writing ability or science attainment are having a significant impact in raising pupils' levels of achievement.

The curriculum meets the requirements of all pupils on the special needs register. It is compiled carefully in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Code of Practice. Individual Education Plans to support pupils' learning are well written for pupils on the school's special needs register. These are very good and provide clear, specific, achievable steps for learning. They are followed in class and contribute to the good progress made by these pupils. Each plan is reviewed on a regular termly basis and the child's movement on the register is monitored closely. There is a good success rate among pupils moving down and off the register. Small groups of pupils are withdrawn for extra support in literacy and numeracy and this is usually done during literacy and numeracy sessions. However, this is not always the case and occasionally work in other subjects is missed.

The quality of support for pupils for whom English is an additional language, or pupils who are under-achieving in literacy, is very good and reflects a considerable improvement upon

the last inspection. These pupils' language development is very closely monitored and the school has a programme of language enrichment groups, which carefully identify individual pupils' needs. The curriculum includes health and sex education, taught within pupils' science lessons. The school recognises the need to develop its health and drugs policy and the importance of providing homework for its pupils. They regularly have homework on literacy and numeracy tasks and occasionally work from other areas of the curriculum. Pupils are well-prepared for the next stage in their education.

A large number of pupils take part in a variety of extra-curricular activities and sports, which currently include football, netball, rounders cricket and basketball. There are regular music and history clubs, together with a weekly meeting of the Jay Team, the Christian based club. Visits to Sandwell Valley Farm and residential weekends at Bracelands in the Forest of Dean extend and enrich the curriculum.

An assessment policy has been introduced that aims to raise standards of pupils' learning. It details the role of teachers in monitoring pupils' work but, as yet, does not offer guidance about the recommended procedures for assessing and recording their achievements, particularly in the foundation subjects and religious education. Whilst there are a few notable examples of high quality ongoing assessment, in mathematics for example, it is not used rigorously enough to measure pupils' success or as the basis for planning later work. Within the Nursery and reception classes, children's baseline assessments are used well to identify children's abilities and needs, and clear targets are set for each child to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The school has recently started to use Key Stage 1 assessment results and Year 3, 4 and 5 test results in reading, writing and mathematics to forecast the likely achievement of its Year 6 pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. This is helping in the setting of challenging targets for individual attainment and for the progress made by each year group.

The introduction of individual pupils' progress record booklets for English, mathematics, science and information technology is a very good way of helping teachers to assess their pupils' progress. The inclusion of examples of pupils' work, which has been clearly marked, within these folders is a very good method for recording pupils' development. Teachers use this information to decide the level of achievement that their pupils have reached within the key stage and to set targets for what they need to learn next. The development of the use of this information to predict a pupil's end of key stage achievement is helping the school to raise the standards of pupils' learning. The school is aware of the need to develop a standard system of recording pupils' progress that extends to all other subjects in the curriculum. Reports to parents meet statutory requirements and offer details of pupils' attainment compared to National Curriculum expectations. Parents of pupils at the end of both key stages receive information regarding their child's performance in nationally administered tests. Statutory requirements for the administration of tests are met.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Overall provision is good. The school aims reflect its high commitment to emphasising the values of its multi-cultural nature and promoting tolerance towards all its members. The arrangements for pupils' social development are very good, for moral and cultural good, and those for spiritual development are sound. The contributions of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are clearly valued and welcomed.

The school's ethos, in which all pupils are viewed as unique and positively valued, is very good. The assembly themes, which incorporate pupils' contributions through singing, acting and music, provide sound spiritual awareness. Pupils are given some opportunities to think about their experiences and participate in brief prayers during assembly, whatever their faith. Such a meaningful example was noted at 11.00 am on the 11th of November, when pupils in Key Stage 2 observed two minutes silence while reflecting on the implications of war and peace. There is evidence of awe and wonder in some lessons across the curriculum, for instance in a Year 6 class watching an animated film of Macbeth, or the whole school assembly being enthralled

with the story of Daniel's fate in the lion's den. Teachers value pupils' own contributions and ideas expressed in works of art and creativity in dance. There are regular visits by the local vicar to lead prayer during assemblies and pupils have a time for reflection each lunch-time while saying grace before meals.

All adults and pupils work hard to achieve the high standards of behaviour seen throughout the school. Class and school rules to which pupils have contributed are clearly displayed. The school actively promotes self-respect and regard for other people and their property, and has worked hard and successfully to raise pupils' self-esteem. Pupils are rewarded with praise and commendations from all staff including the Headteacher. They fully understand acceptable behaviour and, with very few exceptions, behave in an honest, fair and respectful manner. They know the difference between right and wrong, and there are some opportunities to explore moral issues in organised discussions such as poverty in Romania or Belarus.

Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. All pupils are encouraged to relate well to each other both in the playground and through shared activities in the classroom, especially in mathematics, science, physical education and art lessons, and in discussion during the literacy hour. Teams of older pupils have responsibilities for others around the school, for example reading to and writing stories for younger classes, and helping during and after dinners. This is an area of improvement since the last inspection. Increasing opportunities are being provided for pupils to exercise independence in their own learning, for instance in research skills both at school and at home. Pupils are made aware of and help those less fortunate than themselves both at home and abroad. For example, during the inspection, pupils donated a substantial amount of money to a representative from Oxfam. Other worthy causes have included food for Romania and Belarus and money donations to the Marie Curie Cancer Fund. Good opportunities are further provided for social development through a variety of visits to churches, parks, museums and residential trips for Years 3 and 4 to Ludlow and Years 5 and 6 to Bracelands Camp in the Forest of Dean.

Many opportunities exist within the curriculum for the study of other cultures. For example, in literacy lessons a variety of stories, fables, myths and poems are used as a basis for much of the work. Art, music, history and geography also contribute to pupils' cultural development, especially European. The celebrations within other faiths such as Diwali and the summer Afro-Caribbean Carnival further extend pupils' awareness of the diverse cultures represented within the school community. Assemblies are frequently used to introduce pupils to a wider range of music such as performances on the sitar and steel drums, as well as Asian traditional dance. Pupils also visit the mosque, Gudwara and church on a regular basis. They are benefiting from these experiences.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

Class teachers carry out their responsibilities for the pastoral care of their pupils effectively. They are advised of the importance of recording pupils' daily progress and of assessing the skills required for termly pupil records. Class teachers and support staff know the children and their families well. Any discipline issues are recorded and dated. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are particularly strong. Parents are told the reason if a child receives a 'Friday detention'. Pupils' annual reports give a good picture of their development, and indicate strengths and weaknesses. All pupils on the special educational needs register are strongly supported by their teachers in their progress to meet the targets identified in their individual education plans. The school's personal, social and health education programmes help to develop pupils' self-esteem and encourage knowledge of others. Pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported.

The school's health and safety policy is well established with good cooperation between the governors, staff and caretaker. Great care, for example, was taken during the inspection to safeguard the pupils' safety when contractors had to come into the playground to erect a new fence. Teachers encourage children to be aware of safety and health issues and the high standards noted in the previous report have been maintained. There are two trained first aiders and others with knowledge of first aid. There is no sickroom, and children are cared for near the office. This was seen to be effective in practice during the inspection.

The Headteacher is the teacher responsible for child protection and works very closely with outside agencies where necessary. Other staff are advised clearly of their responsibilities and, unusually,

support staff are also given specific advice. A pupil who had recently joined the school found it more welcoming than any other he had attended, confirming the sense that the school is successful in promoting the health, safety and general well being of the pupils. The school has very effective links with local authority support services in meeting the specific learning needs identified for some pupils. The work is carefully planned and monitored, and is an important reason why these pupils make good progress.

Partnership with parents and the community

All members of the staff working with children under five maintain good relationships with parents with whom they are in regular contact. Parents are supportive and contribute in several ways, but few become involved in school, although they are given every encouragement to do so. Many help with reading and other activities at home.

The school encourages parental involvement in their children's learning and in the work of the school. The prospectus is clear and helpful, telling parents about the school through a series of well laid out information panels, enlivened by children's drawings and photographs. Letters home and termly newsletters are useful and friendly, and are translated into a home language where possible. The leaflets introducing and explaining the numeracy strategy are an admirable innovation. Most parents responding to the questionnaire felt that the school gave them clear information about what was taught. Most also feel that the school is approachable and treats them with respect. The school secretary's willingness to listen is especially valued. A few parents help with specific projects, but on the whole, despite the school's best efforts, many parents do not attend the general information meetings. This concern was also noted at the time of the previous inspection. However, the percentage of responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire has tripled and is an encouraging sign. Annual pupils' reports are well constructed and show insight. Only about 80%-85% of parents come to the termly parents' evenings about their children's progress but 97% feel that their children achieve a good standard of work. The school reviews individual education plans with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and keeps them well informed of their children's progress.

The school's partnership with the church and the local business community is satisfactory. The Vicar is a governor and a frequent visitor to the school. She encourages pupils to use the church as a place of worship and as a resource for learning more about Christianity. Teachers strive to give pupils a good understanding of the world beyond their neighbourhood through educational visits and comparative studies in geography lessons. The summer carnival is a successful community event.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership shown by the Headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body and senior staff is very good. They have an unmistakable sense of purpose and a clear determination to raise standards. The Governing Body, teaching staff, caretaker, school secretary, and other support staff, are equally committed to the full achievement of the school's aims and ambitions. This is understood and much appreciated by parents. The high standards of leadership and management noted in the previous report have been maintained and strengthened. The senior management team represents all the key areas within the school and provides strong support to the Headteacher in the strategic management of the school. The Chair of the Governing Body shares the Headteacher's commitment and works very hard both within meetings and during the working week to guide and support the school in its work. The Headteacher, Governing Body and staff have a very strong capacity to sustain and increase the school's rate of improvement.

Senior staff work hard to carry out their responsibilities. The Headteacher observes teachers at work in their classrooms twice a term, concentrating on literacy, numeracy and religious education. She is fully involved in setting and agreeing long term curriculum plans, and in the analysis of information about standards so that realistic but challenging targets can be set for pupil improvement. Her termly

reports to the Governing Body are succinct and give a very clear account of the school's current position. The role of the subject co-ordinators has been effectively developed and strengthened since the previous inspection, especially in the core subjects. The mathematics co-ordinator, for example, reviews all teachers' weekly plans and monitors how their evaluations are used to shape future lessons. She is released from her class on a regular basis to observe numeracy in other classes, looks at pupils' work, spreads good practice, works alongside colleagues and supports those who are uncertain. She is able to make informed judgements about standards and advises the Headteacher and Governing Body on progress towards the school's targets. The information technology co-ordinator monitors teaching, learning and pupil progress very effectively. The early years co-ordinator has very clear vision for future development of work with the under fives. She is a good team leader and sets an example of consistently good practice.

The Governing Body carries out its responsibilities very conscientiously. It is committed and increasing in confidence. The numeracy governor, for example, is as great an enthusiast as the co-ordinator. Formal governors' meetings are held twice a term. Minutes are clear and would give a non-attender or parent a very clear picture of what had taken place. Good use is made of committees to carry out more detailed work. They have appropriate written terms of reference. Individual governors are linked with different classes and most manage to visit "their" class twice a year. Pupils in Year 6, for example, knew who their governor was and pointed out his photograph on the information board. The numeracy, literacy, and special educational needs governors, take a particular interest in these areas of the school's work and give the Governing Body a depth of knowledge on which to draw when these subjects are discussed. Other areas of the curriculum are not linked so strongly. The Governing Body fulfils all its statutory responsibilities, including those relating to the Code of Practice.

The school development plan is very well organised. The planning cycle is clear, well organised and allows all the subject co-ordinators to influence its final shape. The school's agreed main priorities are set out clearly, are firmly based on an audit of the current position and conclude with challenging targets for improvement. Timescales, responsibilities and financial implications are identified clearly. In addition to the main priorities, each curriculum area and aspect of the school has its own clear action plan for improvement.

Leadership and management by the key stage co-ordinators of pupils with special educational needs is very good. At both key stages there is effective monitoring of the special educational needs register and careful preparation of pupils' individual educational plans, completed in discussion with both teachers and parents. Effective guidance is given to teachers by the special educational needs co-ordinators in the procedures for identifying, assessing and providing for pupils. The Governing Body is kept well informed of special educational needs teaching throughout the school and its representative effectively monitors the progress of pupils within the school through regular visits to classrooms and discussions with co-ordinators.

The ethos is very strong. There is a very positive climate for learning in all parts of the school. Children's work is valued in attractive displays and in the achievement assemblies. Pupils' attitudes to work are positive, even when for some higher attaining pupils, the work lacks challenge. Relationships are very strong. There is a very clear commitment to improvement, a high emphasis on self-esteem and in taking a pride in one's work, being a caring community and to high standards.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

The Nursery is staffed by a full-time teacher and two well qualified full-time nursery nurses. There are two reception classes, one with a full time teacher and the other with two part-time teachers. Two classroom assistants, who are shared with the Key Stage 1 classes, also support the reception teachers.

All teachers are qualified, some comparatively recently, while others have a considerable depth of experience. Although the school has had recent difficulties in recruiting a science co-ordinator, and a recently qualified teacher is acting in this post, the match of number, qualifications and experience of teachers is satisfactory. The school has also attracted, helped to develop and deployed a wide range of good quality learning support staff who work alongside the teaching staff and make an important contribution to the demands of the curriculum. Other staff, including the caretaker and the school secretary, are also key members of the team, and help to create a secure, caring setting in which the children can progress and strive to reach to their full potential. New staff are carefully introduced to the school, and offered professional development linked to the needs of the school. The expertise and knowledge of teachers and support staff to the requirements of supporting pupils with special educational needs are good. There is regular training to develop their skills and understanding in order to carry out their role effectively.

The Nursery and reception classrooms are bright and well organised. They have good displays of pictures and artefacts for all the areas of learning and provide a stimulating learning environment. Resources for learning are good and there is a good secure outdoor play area. The accommodation is satisfactory for present numbers of pupils although space for activities will be at a premium by early spring next year when the Nursery has admitted all the pupils enrolled for this academic year.

The school makes every effort to overcome the disadvantages of a building designed for a different teaching era. Some classrooms in Key Stage 2 are too crowded for some practical activities, but good use is already being made of the two new, larger classrooms in Key Stage 1. The school makes good use of its staffing ratios to reduce the size of teaching groups where possible, for example, in the grouping arrangements for science and extended writing in Key Stage 2. The school is also aware of the need to ensure that classes do not grow to a size that stops the curriculum being taught effectively. External provision is good.

Learning resources are sufficient for the secure delivery of the curriculum and for the range of pupils including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language. Resources for geography, especially maps, are more limited. Resources are well stored and easily available in all subject areas. The school makes good use of the local authority library and resource services to supplement its own collection of books, artefacts and other equipment. Staff have removed out-dated books from the library and children are presented with an exciting choice of new fiction and non-fiction. The library is now ready for further development as a centre for independent learning. The new computer suite was being installed during the inspection week.

The efficiency of the school

Day-to-day financial control and management of the school are very good due to the effective overview of the Headteacher and school finance administrator. The Governing Body, through financial reports and discussions at each of its meetings, is appropriately involved in the school's financial affairs. Financial planning is very good despite a deficit budget that has accrued over time due to long-term staff illnesses. A deficit budget plan agreement between the Governing Body and the local education authority indicates that the budget should be balanced within three years. Effective plans are already in place to meet this target. The school's development plan is well costed and financial allocations reflect the school's priorities. The school finance administrator, Headteacher, chair of the Finance Committee, and the local education finance

officer, monitor finances meticulously each half term. The local authority budget officer meets regularly with the Headteacher to review financial operations and produces a detailed reconciliation report for the financial committee each month setting out the state of the school budget. This is then presented to the full Governing Body. Effective systems are in place for the handling, recording and auditing of school fund money for visits and petty cash. The segregation of duties in relation to raising orders, checking deliveries, signing invoices and authorising payments is also effective. The latest audit report commends the school's financial systems and the minor recommendations have mostly been implemented.

The Governing Body is very committed to the school and has a clear understanding of its duties. Governors work closely with the Headteacher to ensure that they fulfil their duty to plan, control and monitor the management of the school. The school has achieved the Investors in People award and has recently been commended for further progress in meeting the standard. Good use is made of teachers and support staff. Their deployment is good, and pupils benefit from their commitment. The flexibility provided for curriculum planning, monitoring and professional development of staff represents effective use of the school's budget. Funding for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is used to provide good support. The budgets allocated to the school for pupils' enhanced learning provision are very well used in the deployment of additional nursery nurses, whose effective work has made a considerable impact on the pupils concerned. The caretaker, cleaning staff, cook and lunchtime supervisors all make a valuable and valued contribution to the smooth running of the school and the welfare of pupils. Accommodation indoors and outside is used effectively. Learning resources are well used.

Considering the socio-economic circumstances of pupils, their lower than average attainment on entry, pupils' overall satisfactory attainment and good progress, their good attitudes and behaviour, the overall good quality of teaching, together with the average unit cost, the school provides good value for money. This is an improvement since the last inspection, which reported that value for money was satisfactory.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

Children are admitted to the Nursery in the month following their third birthdays. There are two parallel mixed-ability classes, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. The children move into the reception classes for the academic year in which they become five.

Overall standards of attainment on entry to the Nursery are below the average for children of that age. Many have very little facility with language and self-expression. English is an additional language for a significant proportion of the children. Many have little experience of number related or creative activities, or social interaction. Children's work on entry indicates that they have had little opportunity to practise using crayons, paints or pencils. By the time they begin Key Stage 1 the children have made good progress and the majority have reached most of the nationally expected standards set out in the desirable learning outcomes. However, many still have immature speech and a lower than average ability to express themselves clearly, although they understand well and respond quickly to instructions and requests.

Social development

The personal development of children under five is very well promoted. From the beginning of their time in the Nursery, they are given opportunities to make choices and decisions and to take some responsibility for themselves so that they can begin to become independent.

Language and literacy

The school places great emphasis on developing communication skills. The teachers and support staff all engage the children in purposeful conversation at every opportunity. They use many strategies including rhymes and action songs effectively to help the children to extend their vocabulary and learn to express their ideas effectively. The teaching of reading is well structured. From the outset children learn letter shapes and the sounds associated with them. They frequently share books with each other, with older pupils and with adults. Early writing skills are taught carefully. The school makes sure that the children use appropriate materials to help them to develop hand/eye co-ordination and the effective control of pencils and crayons.

Mathematics

Teachers provide a good variety of practical activities, number rhymes and games in the Nursery and reception classes. The children learn to sort, match and count. They put things in order according to colour, size and shape. They measure and compare. Mathematical activities continue in many practical situations throughout the day, for example, when biscuits are shared, children are encouraged to compare shapes or count out the exact number for the group. Teachers use correct mathematical vocabulary consistently and make sure the children use it as well.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

The children take part in many activities designed to extend their experience of the world in which they live. They explore the properties of materials including paper, glue, paint, sand, water, and fabrics. They investigate changes in growing things, for example in an activity using autumn leaves. They learn to carry out simple operations on the computer. They have many opportunities for role-play. Sometimes role-play forms part of a structured lesson, as in a very well devised reception class activity in which children practised counting out exact amounts of money in the shop.

Creative development

The school makes very good provision for children to develop their imagination and their ability to express themselves in drawing and painting. They handle a wide variety of tools, puzzles such as jig-saws and have regular opportunities to cut out, arrange and stick shapes in various materials. They become more accurate in using their fingers by moulding and shaping dough and by playing with construction toys and sorting games. The children enjoy singing and respond to music well by dancing and clapping.

Physical development

At present the school does not have a climbing frame for the children under five but there is a good outdoor play space which includes a small hill. The children have good opportunities for scrambling, balancing, and rolling and there are several good wheeled vehicles for them to learn to control speed and direction. The outdoor curriculum is good. The teachers devise well-structured activities and the children make good progress in developing control of their bodies and the co-ordination of their limbs.

Since the previous inspection the school has maintained high standards in the management of behaviour and discipline and in the resources provided for children under five. In most other aspects of the work in the Nursery and reception classes there has been marked improvement. The staff encourage the pupils to engage in conversation whenever possible. They are regularly engaged in discussion, observation and investigation of the world about them. Teachers provide a wide range of practical mathematics activities, games and rhymes. Provision for both creative development and physical development is good. The Nursery and reception classes provide a good foundation for future learning.

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

The percentage of pupils reaching level 2 or above in the 1999 national tests for the end of Key Stage 1 was below the national average but in line with that in similar schools. Standards in reading and writing have steadily risen from a low point in 1997. On the basis of teacher assessment in 1998 54% of pupils achieved the expected Level 2 in speaking and listening, which is very low in comparison with the national average. However, in 1999 this figure rose to 70%, which is a significant improvement. At Key Stage 2 in 1998 the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 or above in English was well below the national average and the average for schools in similar contexts. In 1999 71% of pupils reached Level 4 or above which is in line with the national average and well above when compared with similar schools. Contributory factors forwarded by the school for this very significant improvement include the rigorous application of the National Literacy Strategy and the reduction in class sizes.

This improvement is reflected in the findings of the inspection. The evidence includes a scrutiny of past and present work, concentrated observation of the current Years 2 and 6 classes, and lengthy discussions with individual children. Pupils' attainment in speaking, listening and reading is in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 but is below in writing. The last inspection reported similar findings for reading but the reverse for speaking and listening and writing. Pupils' current attainment near the end of Key Stage 2 is close to the national average, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The school recognises that English, and especially writing, at both key stages, is still an area for further improvement.

Pupils enter school with a limited range of language skills and experiences. The majority, especially those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout both key stages. This follows from a well-organised programme of specifically designed Individual Education Plans which are reviewed regularly to inform future planning. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also make good progress with the support of specialist teachers. Speaking and listening skills are sound with pupils sustaining concentration for lengthy periods. In Key Stage 1 they explain their work, give reasons for the school rules, and describe a favourite character. They can re-tell stories and take part in imaginative play. For example, pupils in Year 2 could recall accurately the events and main characters in 'The Magic Key'. They also make good progress in speaking and listening through the regular plenary times and occasional 'Circle Time' sessions. In Key Stage 2 pupils continue to make good progress. They read aloud and enact a story as well as sharing ideas about characters and places, as Year 5 pupils did while analysing 'The Adventures of Isabel'. There are fewer opportunities for independent discussion and formal debate.

Reading is strongly promoted by the school, and pupils including those with special educational needs, make good progress. They are particularly well supported by the high quality home-school liaison reading system. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils read a selection of literature during the literacy hour, express their opinions about stories which they have read, and use a range of strategies when reading independently, such as phonics, prediction and context cues. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils read competently both for pleasure and to obtain information. They read a wide range of literature with their teachers that includes modern poets, for example Ogden Nash, and classical works, for instance Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. The higher attaining pupils select challenging books such as Charles Dickens' 'Mister Quilp' for independent reading. Pupils are competent in using the library. They can find a book on a given subject, use an index and contents page appropriately, and skim the text to locate specific information. They benefit from group reading sessions, and can discuss plot and characterisation fluently. In Year 6 they understand the use of figurative language, recognising for instance that 'there's daggers in men's smiles' is a reference to treachery.

At Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress with their writing skills. By the end of the key stage they are beginning to write in different forms, such as recipes for different menus and writing out the story of 'The Turtle who danced with Crane'. They use some imaginative vocabulary when writing an account of 'Their way home' and many are beginning to set out sentences correctly. The focused and systematic teaching of the literacy programme is evident in examples of extended writing, for instance in history. Spelling skills are developed progressively. Although pupils' handwriting is usually neat and well-formed, few pupils use joined script in their everyday writing. Year 2 pupils write interesting letters to the author Jill Murphy about book illustrations. By the end of the key stage punctuation is becoming more accurate and words are often chosen carefully, especially by higher attaining pupils.

By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils write for a range of purposes and readers, for example letters seeking information from local companies, story-books for younger pupils, poems, newspaper reports and biographies. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand the use of tenses, adjectives and synonyms. The skills of dialogue and paragraphing are steadily developed in Years 5 and 6. They have opportunities to improve their work by drafting, editing, proof-reading and then presenting the final form. The quality of creative writing, though limited in quantity is frequently high, especially in Years 4 and 6, and reflects the depth of reading experience. Some imaginative vocabulary choices are evident, for example in the reports of Duncan's death by Year 6. Their own written interpretation of the event in play script form and subsequent dramatisation reinforced the importance of language as a means of communication. Pupils learn banks of words to spell correctly and are now developing legible handwriting in a cursive, flowing style using ink.

Literacy is being developed effectively through the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy.

Throughout the school pupils' literacy skills are being constantly improved through other subjects, for example, the importance of listening to and carrying out of instructions in physical education, in writing up a science investigation correctly and compiling a newspaper 'The Roman Times' in history.

Pupils are generally well motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn. They enjoy literacy hour activities. They are interested in what they are doing, usually sustain concentration well and take pride in their work. Resources are handled with care, and they develop their capacity for personal study appropriately. In lessons they are well behaved and courteous, relating very well to adults and their peers, working well collaboratively and individually when required.

Teaching is mostly good and sometimes very good and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers generally make the most of spontaneous opportunities to develop language from pupils' interests. For example, in a Year 4 lesson on newspaper articles, pupils were given the opportunity to identify and attribute powerful verbs to a variety of their own experiences. Information technology is used occasionally. Teachers introduce pupils to a wide range of different forms of writing systematically. Appropriate strategies for reading, like the use of phonics, context cues and word recognition are promoted. They choose suitable texts to emphasise aspects of literacy as in Year 2 when 'On the way Home' was used to illustrate descriptive narrative. Teachers' expectations are good, with clear instructions given and questions effectively used to revise pupils' previous learning, and to challenge their thinking about the new topic. Their close liaison with educational support assistants has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning, and attainment and progress throughout the school. Pupils with English as an additional language benefit from the extra support they receive. Assessment opportunities are not always identified in the short-term planning. The quality of marking varies. At its best it is positive, constructive and helps pupils to improve.

The recently appointed co-ordinator is an enthusiastic advocate of the subject and she has already begun to build a portfolio of pupils' levelled work. She is well supported by Key Stage Co-ordinators to ensure that the subject is well managed and the curriculum is well planned and appropriately monitored to ensure good coverage, balance and continuity. The Policy and Scheme have recently been updated to reflect current practice and the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy. Medium term planning is thorough. The new 'Pupil Progress Record' book is a very effective way to record attainment and progress. Although there is an adequate supply of books within classes, the central libraries are under-stocked as many old books have been discarded. The school plans to address the short-fall as finances permit. In the meantime a large supply of fiction and non-fiction books are bought in on a termly basis from the Library Service.

Mathematics

In 1999 the percentage of children reaching the national target for mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, while remaining below the national average, showed a steady improvement since 1997. The school exceeded its own targets by 10%. The results were in line with those reached in similar schools. The rise in the number of pupils reaching the national target at the end of Key Stage 2 is impressive. The percentage reaching level 4 in 1999 rose from 16% in 1997, and 27% in 1998, to 61%. The results, while below the average for all schools, are above average for similar schools. The school is determined to continue this good progress and has set tough but realistic targets for year groups in Key Stage 1 and for individual pupils in Key Stage 2. They are also using the new national numeracy strategy very effectively to bring added rigour and enthusiasm to teaching and learning.

Current standards of attainment in pupils' books and lessons are below average at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils work confidently with money up to 20 pence, using their heads to work out what they could afford to buy in a toy shop, but many need to count each of the spots on a dice to see that $5+3+4=12$. Higher attaining pupils work with greater understanding and are able to handle larger numbers up to 100. All pupils are familiar with graphs and can explain how these record their different shoe sizes and heights. They have some understanding of how to measure length and weight, and know the names of common two-dimensional shapes. They know how to use their mathematical knowledge in practical situations. Progress within the key stage is sound. Younger children build effectively on the knowledge gained in the nursery and reception classes. They count confidently, add and subtract to 10, and higher attaining pupils work easily with numbers to 20. Particularly effective use is made of links to other areas of the curriculum. Work on "two" and "pairs" is brought to life in a colourful display based on the story of Noah's Ark, and children enjoyed finding straight lines, patterns and shapes in the geometric paintings of Kandinsky.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with national averages and have improved since the previous inspection especially in mental arithmetic. Most pupils can multiply and divide by 100, work in decimals, explain simple fractions and percentages, and use their knowledge to carry out mathematical investigations. They understand co-ordinates and use them to show where the treasure has been hidden on mysterious islands. They can explain line and block graphs, and understand that the probability of a coin coming down heads or tails is equal. Pupils have a secure knowledge of shape. Lower attaining pupils in Year 6 know the properties and names of different types of triangle, and other regular and irregular shapes. Middle and higher attaining pupils recognise complex shapes, understand symmetry and can draw the "reflected" pattern using squared paper. Good links are made to art through the use of rangoli patterns. Higher attaining pupils can draw complex patterns, seeing the reflection in their heads, and only use mirrors to check the accuracy of the final drawing. They can work with numbers to 1000, explain negative numbers, and multiply and divide decimals to two places.

Progress is good in Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 3 have a good understanding of the basic multiplication tables and processes. They remember what they have learned and use their knowledge with increasing confidence. Higher attaining pupils make good progress when they are challenged by the materials and encouraged to think mathematically, as was seen when a pupil explained that multiplication was "repeated addition," giving examples, and when pupils in Year 4 struggled with their 7x table but were determined to be successful. Pupils in all classes ask questions to check their understanding and higher attaining pupils, in particular, increase their progress rate as they learn to correct their own answers. Progress is less evident if the tasks are initially challenging but become repetitive. Good progress is often the result of teachers' careful planning, the successful introduction of the rigour of the numeracy strategy and the pupils' own desire to be successful. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good, especially when they are working with a supporting adult.

Pupils in all classes enjoy mathematics. They like the use of games and the challenge of the daily quick fire mental session. They are keen to offer answers and ideas, are attentive and settle to their work quickly. They are able to work independently and are particularly supportive of each other in paired work. Although the noise levels rose too much in some classes, the children continued to work hard. Most work is neatly set out and presented. Mathematics lessons are happy and purposeful. Some pupils find it difficult to find the exact words they need to express mathematical ideas but this does not stop them trying, as was seen when a lower attaining pupil explained the difference between two-dimensional and three dimensional shapes as thin and thick. Her mathematical knowledge and understanding were secure, and her enthusiasm at last gave her a way to express it.

The overall quality of teaching is sound in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teachers work hard and enjoy the subject. Good use is made of the national numeracy strategy materials in all classes, especially in the mental sessions that start each lesson and in the plenary sessions that end them. Planning is very thorough, activities are enjoyable and classroom displays are used effectively as reference points for children's learning or to record their success. This was seen in Year 4, for example, when pupils kept referring to the tables charts as they consolidated their understanding of multiplication. In the best lessons, the teachers' own enthusiasm is infectious and their determination that the children should be successful influences their work and leads to greater progress. Mathematical language is introduced at an early stage and is used naturally throughout the school. Lessons have pace and rigour, and relationships are strong. Pupils are always told the lesson objectives, and in the best examples, these are expressed in terms of what they will be able to do that they could not do at the start of the session. Year 5/6, for example, were told that they would be able to identify shapes confidently, and they did. In a few lessons the teaching was sound, but the activities were not clearly focused as previous work had not been fully assessed or marked to ensure that the day's lesson was based firmly on what the pupils had shown they could do. Not enough use is made of IT as a tool to extend learning. The concerns about teaching noted in the previous report have been addressed, particularly about low teacher expectation in Key Stage 2.

The subject is very well led and managed. The co-ordinator works closely with the numeracy governor. They share a common enthusiasm, and a clear vision for the future successful development of the subject and increased standards of attainment. The numeracy strategy has been introduced successfully, and its benefits are already apparent in the improved results in national tests in both key stages, the pupils' enthusiasm and the rigour of the teaching. The co-ordinator monitors and evaluates pupils' work in all classes, looks at the weekly planning and has regular opportunities to visit class rooms to observe the work, support colleagues and spread good practice. She is developing and refining assessment procedures effectively, and has plans to introduce a portfolio of work graded against National Curriculum levels and setting for older pupils. The school has ensured that the resources for the numeracy strategy are in place. They are used effectively and with care.

Science

The results of the standard assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 2 showed a substantial improvement in 1999 over the results obtained in previous years. 60% of the pupils reached level 4, almost twice as many as in 1998. At the end of Key Stage 1, teacher assessments showed that 61% of the pupils reached level 2 and above, which was lower than in 1998. 8% reached level 3 in 1999 whereas none had done so in 1998. Although the results have improved, they are still well below national average, and below average when compared with those in schools with similar backgrounds.

Standards of attainment in the lessons seen during the inspection were, as a result of the direct teaching, almost always satisfactory and were sometimes good. However, conversations with pupils during the inspection indicated that, although scientific knowledge was satisfactory, the ability to express or apply knowledge clearly and concisely was less secure. This, combined with standards seen in written work, means that overall levels of attainment are below national expectations at the end of both key stages. Progress is satisfactory in both key stages. Progress in class is always satisfactory, and is good or very good in most knowledge based lessons. Standards and progress are similar in all attainment targets, although pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise devising their own experiments to test their own hypotheses. Pupils enjoy science lessons. They are especially interested in practical work. They collaborate well and work together effectively in pairs or small groups. The pupils treat equipment with care and are sensitive to each other's needs.

The quality of teaching at both key stages is at least satisfactory and in the majority of lessons it is good or very good. Throughout the school the teachers emphasise the use of correct vocabulary and scientific terminology. The most successful lessons are well structured. Previous work is revised to ensure a solid foundation for new learning. The various parts of the lesson are carefully timed to keep up a brisk pace and every part is focused upon the key objectives. The work is well matched to the abilities of the pupils, and the teachers provide interesting activities that reinforce the learning objectives. However, sometimes the evaluation of a previous lesson is not used to adjust the plans for the next lesson. In the less effective lessons, activities are not precisely matched to previous levels of understanding, and some pupils, usually those capable of higher attainment, are not challenged enough. In most lessons the experiments are prescribed. The pupils follow instructions and observe the results, and higher attaining pupils are not given opportunities to test extra factors of their own choosing.

The science curriculum is well balanced. The plans for each term show steady continuity and progression both within each topic and from year to year. The pupils are taught the principles that govern good scientific method and what constitutes a fair test thoroughly. However, the curriculum is knowledge based. It provides a good basis for future learning, but there are not enough opportunities for research either from books or using information technology. Pupils are not encouraged to show initiative or to become scientific thinkers. The procedures for assessment are good. The school has devised a good, on-going record scheme in which the level of each pupil's attainment in each topic is recorded.

The newly appointed science co-ordinator is enthusiastic. She has already carried out a review of the present situation and has a clear vision for future development. At present science in Key Stage 2 is taught in small groups, made by creating four single year group classes from three mixed-age classes. This has a positive impact on the number of pupils in each group and on the space available for practical work, and helps to raise standards. The school uses recent national guidance in planning the work. The co-ordinator monitors plans and is reviewing lesson evaluations in order to develop a whole school scheme of work. Science is taught in class bases, some of which are small for whole class practical work. Resources are satisfactory and appropriately stored and labelled.

Since the previous inspection the school has raised the quality of teaching and maintained good progress. The standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 have shown a considerable improvement even though they are still disappointingly lower than the national average. The outdoor environmental area is still at the planning stage as the school was waiting for building developments to be completed.

Information technology [IT]

Pupils' attainment in information technology is in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are able to access programmes of their choice and are competent at saving their work and retrieving information. Year 2 pupils select a variety of painting tools to create straight line shapes and colour their designs, which they compare with the work of the artist Mondrian. They demonstrate their skills in directing a programmable robot to follow a route that they have drawn onto a treasure island map.

By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are using word processing programmes with a good degree of understanding and are able to enter information onto a spreadsheet to produce graphs and charts. Pupils in Year 6 are confident of moving pictures and written information between programmes in order to build up a presentation to which they will add sounds and information from the Internet.

All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress at both Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils in Year 1 develop skills in correcting sentences and are able to remove and add words to text. At Key Stage 2, pupils show good progress in acquiring skills of communication. Year 3 and 4 pupils change the size, type and colour of their work to create different effects and use a painting programme to create different patterns. In presenting work for a festival of art, pupils in Year 5 used a digital camera to create images of different materials, which they scanned into a computer, and created different colouring effects, from which they made stamps for display.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their computer studies and have high levels of confidence. They co-operate very well, giving advice and support to each other. They show good concentration, working for sustained periods without teacher help. They treat equipment with care and respect.

The quality of teaching is good overall at both Key Stages 1 and 2. All teachers are confident in their demonstrations of information technology skills to their pupils and explain activities clearly to them, which develops their understanding. Where teaching is most effective, tasks are challenging, such as in a Year 2 lesson, where pupils used a painting programme to create the effects of the artist Mondrian and at Year 6, where pupils prepared for a multi-media presentation of their skills.

In the last inspection it was noted that there was a need to develop progression in the development of information technology skills throughout the school. This has been effectively achieved with a well balanced programme of information technology learning for each year group, supported by appropriate software. However, this is not as yet linked to skills in most other subjects in the curriculum, and schemes of work do not contain guidance on when best to extend pupils' experiences by using information technology. The school is aware of this shortcoming and has set this as a target in its subject development plans.

The co-ordinator provides strong leadership and has good subject knowledge. She has kept a regular audit of work covered in each year group and developed a portfolio of individual pupils' achievement in information technology, which is well used by all teachers and gives a clear recording of pupils' progress in the subject. The vision of the co-ordinator has played an important part in the development of the school's new computer suite, which was in the process of being resourced and networked at the time of the inspection.

Religious education

Standards at the end of both key stages are in line with the requirements of the Sandwell Agreed Syllabus. The curriculum follows a two-year cycle, and pupils have regular opportunities to learn about the major festivals and key elements of the Christian faith. They learn about other major world faiths through a range of thematic topics and in-depth studies of Sikhism and Judaism. The subject is fully recognised as a core subject and the standards noted in the previous report have been maintained. The use of artefacts has improved through selective use of a good quality loan system.

Pupils in Year 2 have learned about Diwali as a major festival of light and decorated the hall with colourful candles. They have learned about the robes worn by the Vicar and that the colours reflect the various festivals within the Christian year. Pupils in Year 6 have studied signs and symbols in great depth. They can describe each of the five symbols of Sikhism, giving them the correct names, know that the lotus flower is important to Buddhists, and understand the importance of the Seder plate to Jews at the time of Passover. Some are confused about the difference between the crucifix and the empty cross for Christians. They have a good recall of the events of Easter and know why it was remarkable that a Samaritan helped a Jew in the parable.

Progress is sound in all lessons, but higher attaining pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, are not given enough opportunities to explore or research the subject material in greater depth. This limits

their progress. Teachers' planning indicates the curriculum is covered in a systematic way but some younger children's knowledge of basic elements of Christianity is very thin. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make satisfactory progress in understanding that Advent leads to the birth of Jesus, and that several world faiths have a festival of light in the autumn. Pupils in Year 4 have learned about synagogues and the celebration of the Passover. Pupils in Year 5 have visited Holy Trinity church and made careful observational drawings of the font, lectern and other important features.

The quality of teaching is sound overall, but it is good in a third of lessons. Teaching is well planned and good use is made of artefacts. Teachers use specialist vocabulary correctly and are very successful in enabling the children to develop a respect for those who worship in different ways or who have different religious practices. Relationships are good and individual children are encouraged to talk about their own faiths and customs. Care is taken to vary the way in which work is recorded, and pupils in Year 2 for example, worked very hard in pairs to record the results of their discussion of important family celebrations. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator. The policy is good. Medium term planning is under revision and appropriate guidance and professional development are being obtained from the local authority and diocese.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

It was possible to observe only one lesson in each key stage during inspection week. Judgements are also based on discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of their work. Progress is satisfactory in both key stages in lessons, in the work on display and in the year-to-year collections of work.

The pupils enjoy their art lessons. They discuss their work with enthusiasm and some of the older pupils talk knowledgeably about the work of established artists. Lesson plans contain clear learning objectives. A good range of activities, media, techniques and subjects are introduced. The work includes portraits, landscapes, three-dimensional work and illustrations. There are examples of observational drawings done both in class and on outside visits, for example to the parish church as part of religious education. Pupils in Key Stage 2 use sketchbooks, but there is little evidence that they are used for experimenting with colours, techniques and designs prior to making a finished piece of work. In this respect the more talented pupils are not extended.

The curriculum is good in spite of the short time available for art. The programmes of study set out in the National Curriculum are covered very well. The work of established artists is often used as a focus for creativity. The policy document and skills chart give good guidance to teachers but there is no whole school scheme of work. The Key Stage 2 art co-ordinator has been appointed recently. She has a clear vision for development of the subject for the older pupils and is beginning to review the curriculum topic by topic to build new units of work together with the necessary resources. Individual teachers assess the pupils' work in their own way as there is no whole school assessment scheme. Resources are adequate but need careful management to make sure they are sufficient. The co-ordinators organise the materials well. Support materials for teachers are very well arranged in topic boxes such as Asian, African, and Mediaeval, and there is a good list of books and visual aids. The timetable is arranged sensibly so that art and design technology alternate in order to make the best use of materials and equipment.

Since the previous inspection there have been several improvements in the subject. Standards at Key Stage 1 have been maintained and at those Key Stage 2 are now satisfactory. Skills are still taught effectively and there are good opportunities for creativity. Art, craft and design from non-western cultures are well in evidence in the school.

Design and technology

Only a limited number of lessons were observed during the inspection week, all of which were in Key Stage 2. However, discussion with teachers, pupils and the subject co-ordinator as well as evidence from planning, displays and portfolios indicate that pupils' skills in designing and making develop steadily as they move through the school. Overall pupils' progress, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory in both key stages. The last inspection reported progress at Key Stage 1 to be good and that at Key Stage 2 to be satisfactory.

By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are aware of the links between the designing and making elements of technology. In Year 2 pupils successfully design and select appropriate materials and tools when making Easter boxes as presents for parents. Year 1 pupils display appropriate levels of manipulative skills while designing and making models of crabs, elephants and crocodiles using paper and fasteners. They also use large construction materials appropriately when building houses and castles.

In Key Stage 2 pupils use evaluation sheets, but not always consistently, to set out which materials would be needed to record changes that were made and then to evaluate their final design. A good example of this system was in Year 3, where pupils designed and made chariots in conjunction with a topic on Ancient Rome. By Year 5, pupils have sufficiently well-developed skills to design mobiles, mechanisms and pneumatics using card, timber, cotton reels, tubes and motors. Pupils in Year 4 have designed and made a selection of Viking longboats and mechanised pop-up figures. In Years 3 and 4 pupils have successfully used paper structures to make jewellery boxes and Tudor houses linked to a history project. Most pupils throughout the key stage have a sound understanding of the designing, making and evaluation process in technology, use technical knowledge correctly and are aware of safety. Work is often precise and care is taken to finish the product well. There is limited evidence of the control aspect of technology.

Attitudes are good and pupils work sensibly together. They are interested in their work as was observed and noted in a Year 5/6 class designing and making cams. They show sustained concentration and most endeavour to improve performance. Sensible choices are made about the types of materials and tools needed.

The quality of teaching is sound. Effective management, organisation and discipline help pupils to develop skills and understanding in the making process. Subject knowledge is less secure in some classes. However, good use of technical vocabulary and the teaching of specific skills, for example using a saw and bench correctly, ensure that older pupils maintain sound progress. There is an appropriate balance between the designing and making components of technology. The lessons are planned from programmes based on recent national guidance. There are good links with other subjects, including history, art and science.

The co-ordinator is a keen supporter of the subject, possessing good expertise himself. He regularly evaluates the finished products and is constantly available to advise colleagues. His future plans include developing the control, assembling and disassembling aspects of the subject. Visits have been arranged to the Dudley College of Technology to extend pupils' skills and interests by taking their part in plumbing, bricklaying and woodwork activities.

Geography

No geography lessons were timetabled at Key Stage 1 during the inspection. However, an inspection of pupils' work and discussions with teachers indicate that pupils' progress at both Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good in both key stages.

At Key Stage 1, younger pupils take part in walks around the locality of their school and draw pictures of buildings that they see, which they position onto a large road map. Older pupils observe the use of different buildings, from which they make models and begin to use geographical words. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 investigate the problems of traffic around school and talk about ways of improving road safety. Year 2 pupils are able to identify changes that are taking place around school and talk about the quality of their surroundings. They develop their sense of scale and direction in drawing simple plans of their classroom. Pupils at Key Stage 2 develop their geographical skills in recording the use of land in the neighbourhood onto a large scale map. In Year 5, pupils write to a school in Edmonton and compare the differences between their own locality and that part of London. By the end of the Key Stage, pupils in Year 6 use a large scale aerial photograph of Sandwell from which they find features on an Ordnance Survey map and in an introductory lesson on the course of a river, are able to describe changes that they observe in the landscape.

Pupils' attitudes to learning in geography lessons are satisfactory overall. Where they are good, pupils respond well when given the opportunity to use a variety of resources to investigate problems. In all lessons observed during the inspection, pupils listened carefully to their teachers and were keen to give information and answer questions. Pupils work together well in groups and support each other sensibly in their class work. The quality of teaching observed at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. All teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of geography through lively questioning, which strongly influences pupils' attitudes towards their learning. Teachers have a good relationship with their pupils and value their contributions in discussion, which helps them develop their understanding of geographical activities.

Some aspects identified from the previous inspection have not, as yet, been fully addressed. Pupils' knowledge of distant places remains insecure, and the schools' long term geography plan offers limited opportunities for pupils to consider other peoples and cultures in either key stage. Resources for geography are unsatisfactory as the school does not have enough maps at different scales, a variety of study packs of different parts of the world and more visual photographic resources to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs. At present, there is no scheme of work to complement the existing "topic planner" and year group teachers plan in termly units of work from schemes recently introduced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The key stage co-ordinators for the subject recognise the need to develop a progression in pupils' learning and geographical skills through a carefully planned scheme of work, adapted to the schools' own needs and including the use of appropriate IT, and to ensure that a process of assessing and recording pupil achievement is included.

History

History is taught within a two year cycle. This term Years 5 and 6 are focusing on geography, and it was only possible to see one history lesson in Key Stage 2. No lessons were observed in Key Stage 1. However, from an examination of pupils' books, wall displays and conversations with the children themselves, it can be judged that progress is sound throughout the school and that most of the concerns noted in the previous report have been addressed. Many children in Key Stage 2 still have a weak sense of chronology and have great difficulty in seeing how historical events fit together as a continuum. The exception is higher attaining pupils in Year 6 who can explain historical progression when describing how working conditions, especially those relating to child labour in factories and mines, have improved for us today as a result of actions taken by the Victorian reformers.

Progress is sound in all classes and by all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The youngest children are taught that living things change and develop by looking at family photographs, linking their work to a study of growth in science and measuring their own increasing shoes sizes. Year 2 pupils have started to learn about historical events and famous people through studies of Florence Nightingale and the Great Fire of London. Year 3 have learned about the Tudors and know why Henry VIII remarried so many times. In Year 4 the work comes alive through the pupil's first hand experience of life in Tudor times gained through their visit to the Oak House in West Bromwich. They dress in Tudor clothes, know what it was like to be a servant in a big house, and practice the skills of sweet and pomander making. The history club is a popular after-school activity and pupils extend their understanding of history through personal research.

The teaching seen was sound. The tasks were carefully explained and firmly based on a secure understanding of the material. The children responded well, concentrating on their work and were keen to answer questions. The pupils were well managed, and the setting of mini-time targets sustained the pace of the learning. Good links are made between history and design technology by combining the skills learned in both subjects to produce accurate models. The new co-ordinator has a very clear vision for the future development of the subject. She is keen to combine the recent national guidance on history teaching with the existing scheme of work into a new programme which will teach historical skills as well as content, and develop pupils' awareness of historical chronology and show them how to learn about the past.

Music

During inspection week it was only possible to observe two class lessons in each key stage. All were concerned with the appraisal of recorded music and progress in the lessons was satisfactory overall. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about progress in other parts of the music curriculum.

The pupils have a positive attitude to musical activities. They enjoy joining in the singing in assembly. A small group of pupils demonstrated the contribution music makes to their personal development when they chose the hymn for assembly, set up the audiotape and overhead projector and accompanied the singing on their recorders.

The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was at least satisfactory and in one lesson was very good. The music policy and the curriculum offered are satisfactory. The teachers use published material and the associated audiotapes. The music co-ordinator is the only musically trained member of staff. A visiting teacher is employed to teach singing in Key Stage 2. Visiting teachers also give lessons to small groups of pupils learning to play instruments. At present two pupils learn to play the euphonium and ten the steel pans. These lessons are provided free to the pupils by the Sandwell School of Music. The quality of the provision is good but even so few pupils take advantage of the opportunity

The music curriculum is delivered in units of work. During inspection week the focus of lessons was the structure of music and music appreciation. In the spring term the focus will be composition and lessons will be followed by performances of the pupils' work. Assessment of the pupils' attainment in music is informal. The pupils experience a wide variety of music of differing styles and ethnic origins, as in a very good Year 3 lesson in which the pupils listened to and appraised a Hindu chant for the celebration of Diwali. Music is taught in class bases, some of which are rather small for some of the activities. This means that valuable time has to be used in moving furniture. However the pupils behave sensibly and keep the disruption to a minimum.

Resources for teaching music are good. There is sufficient appropriate support material for the teachers and there is a good range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments. In addition

there is a keyboard and a range of computer software to support the delivery of the National Curriculum programmes of study. There is insufficient evidence to support the evaluation of changes since the previous inspection.

Physical education

During the inspection the focus was mainly on dance, gymnastics and games skills. Pupils in both key stages, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. These findings differ from those of the last inspection which reported progress as good.

In Key Stage 1 pupils display imaginative ideas in dance and gymnastics as they travel both on the floor and on apparatus, changing shape, speed and direction effectively. In dance and movement pupils respond appropriately to music, narrative and hand beats, developing a sequence of linked movements. They show increasing control in speed and tension to express feelings and moods. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are beginning to develop appropriate skills and co-ordination in running, jumping, rolling, swinging, curling and twisting. At Key Stage 2 pupils' ability to evaluate their own performance and that of others is being satisfactorily developed. Pupils demonstrate the ability to build quality sequences in gymnastics with good linking movements combining floor work and apparatus. Their level of control is good while exploring different balances and shapes, and they are aware of safety issues. Pupils make steady progress in the development of hockey, football, netball and rugby skills. In hockey they hold the stick correctly and complete push passes with increasing accuracy. Sometimes they are less successful in controlling the received pass. The more talented footballers dribble effectively, pass and shoot accurately, and tackle with precision. Pupils display a good knowledge of the defensive and offensive positions in netball and are beginning effectively to side-step and feint in rugby drills.

The inspection included a focused view of swimming. Children in Years 2 - 6 are given swimming instruction in blocks of six weeks on a rotational basis. No lessons took place during the period of the inspection, and it was not possible to observe children undergoing instruction. Discussions with the co-ordinator indicate that each group is given a thirty minute lesson, which includes specific instruction and time to practise. Discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator indicate that approximately four out of every five pupils can swim the required 25 metres by the time they transfer to secondary schools. Many can swim distances of 100 metres or more.

The satisfactory progress evident in physical education is associated with consistently sound and often good teaching. This is reflected in the clear instructions and quick, effective assessment of pupils' successes and weaknesses in the best lessons. This was a particularly effective feature of lessons to develop the push pass in hockey, control and passing in netball and interpreting music in creative ways to express feelings and moods. During lessons teachers gradually increase the challenge by making tasks more difficult or suggesting modifications such as speeding up or lengthening the distance of passes in football. Most lessons are well organised and pupil management is good. Teachers use demonstration well to illustrate good practice. Such an example was noted in a Year 4 class where pupils effectively used their 'personal' space while performing an adapted folk dance to taped music.

Pupils clearly enjoy physical activities, and adopt a positive attitude and enthusiastic approach. They work energetically and are keen to succeed. Pupils listen attentively to instructions and co-operate well in group and team games. They respect and value the efforts of others, for example by applauding good movements in gymnastics or scoring a goal in netball. Behaviour is generally good, although individual pupils occasionally behave inappropriately or become uninterested when they have to wait too long for their activity. By Year 6 both boys and girls know the basic rules of netball, football and rugby. Many attend extra-curricular activities such as football and netball clubs, which are used well to further interest and skills. These clubs are sometimes led by coaches or footballers from the local West Bromwich Albion Football Club. School teams take part in the local inter-school competitions for football, netball and athletics.

The co-ordinator, who has been in post for one year, is enthusiastic and has recently updated the physical education policy. She ensures that the full National Curriculum Programme of Study is being taught, including swimming, and has introduced Top Play, Top Sport and Top Gymnastics into the scheme of work. She provides good guidance and support for staff.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The team consisted of five inspectors, including a lay inspector, who spent a total of 20 inspector days in school. The inspection team:-

Spent over 67 hours observing 108 lessons and reviewing children's work

Attended a sample of registration sessions

Attended assemblies

Had lunch with the pupils

Observed pupils' arrival at and departure from school

Observed all teachers at least once and most several times

Had discussions with the Headteacher, teaching and support staff, the Chair of Governors, other governors and support staff visiting school.

Reviewed all the available written work of a representative sample of pupils from each class and heard these and other pupils reading, and reviewed the work from the previous school year.

Held informal discussions with many pupils.

Analysed a large amount of documentation provided by the school both before and during the inspection including

school prospectus; school policies; the Governors' Annual Report to Parents; minutes of governors' meetings; financial statements; the school development plan; subject policies and planning; pupils' records and reports, including those for pupils with special educational needs.

Held a meeting attended by 5 parents and considered 104 responses from parents to a questionnaire asking about their views of the school.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR – Y6	280	1	86	96
Nursery Unit/School	46	0	1	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (YR – Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)

13.6

Number of pupils per qualified teacher

20.6:1

Education support staff (YR – Y6)

Total number of education support staff

5

Total aggregate hours worked each week

91

Qualified teachers (Nursery school, classes or unit)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)

1

Number of pupils per qualified teacher

39:1

Education support staff (Nursery school, classes or unit)

Total number of education support staff

2

Total aggregate hours worked each week

55

Average class size:

25

Financial data

Financial year:

1998/99

	£
Total Income	521044
Total Expenditure	518127

Expenditure per pupil	1721
Balance brought forward from previous year	-10353
Balance carried forward to next year	-7436

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

325

Number of questionnaires returned:

104(32%
)

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	28	64	6	2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	42	57	0	0	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	30	59	8	2	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	45	52	2	1	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	43	56	1	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	35	62	3	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	36	54	10	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	35	59	3	3	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	29	63	7	1	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	32	57	7	3	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	50	48	1	1	0