

INSPECTION REPORT

OAK MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wednesfield, Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104341

Headteacher: Mrs Sara Morris

Reporting inspector: Mr Alan Blank
8358

Dates of inspection: 22nd - 25th May 2000

Inspection number: 189725

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Ryan Avenue
Ashmore Park
Wednesfield
Wolverhampton

Postcode: WV11 2QQ

Telephone number: 01902 558517

Fax number: 01902 558520

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P Purchase

Date of previous inspection: October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Alan Blank	Registered inspector	Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and achievements. How well is the school led and managed?
Alison Smith	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
Judith Hicks	Team inspector	English Music Special educational needs	
Ann Smits	Team inspector	Art Design technology	How well are pupils taught?
John Collier	Team inspector	Science History Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mervyn Ward	Team inspector	Information technology Mathematics	Assessment
Gloria Childs	Team inspector	Religious education Geography Areas of learning for children under five	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The inspection contractor was:

Schools Inspection Unit
School of Education
The University of Birmingham
Birmingham
B15 2TT

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	24
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils aged from 4 - 11:	385 (larger than average)
Pupils with English as an additional language:	0.25%
Pupils entitled to free school meals:	14.5 % (broadly average)
Pupils on the register of special educational needs:	22.6 % (broadly average)

The school is situated in the Wednesfield district of Wolverhampton in the West Midlands. It receives pupils from the neighbouring estate and surrounding area. Most pupils have had some pre-school experience before they enter the reception classes and their attainment at this stage is broadly average. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds make up 2.4% of the school population.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a sound education for its pupils. Results in national tests have fluctuated in recent years, but current standards are in line with the national average. The pupils make satisfactory progress in all subjects except physical education, where progress is good. Teaching is thoroughly sound, with some significant strengths. The school is well led and relationships are good. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The school provides a wide programme of extra-curricular activities that enrich the educational experience for many pupils.
- The extensive programme of visits extends pupils' learning and promotes their social and cultural development.
- Links with partner schools and the community enrich pupils' learning and help them to make a smooth transfer between schools.
- The teaching of reading in Key Stage 1 and the literacy experiences provided at the top of Key Stage 2 help pupils to learn well, and more able pupils achieve high standards in English.

What could be improved

- Attendance is below average, and arrangements for recording and monitoring attendance are unsatisfactory.
- The data on attendance and pupils' performance in national tests is not investigated sufficiently well to explain variations from year to year and governors do not have a clear enough picture of these weaknesses.
- The curriculum is unbalanced and there is insufficient time for some subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection in October 1996. Good progress has been made in the teaching of information technology and in the development of multicultural education. The monitoring of teaching has developed and the quality of teaching has improved. Good systems for appraising staff have been adopted and weaknesses in collective worship have been rectified. Levels of attendance are lower, however. There have been fluctuations in the standards achieved in mathematics and science, but a decline since the last inspection is now being reversed. There remains an imbalance between subjects in the curriculum.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11-year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	C	B	C	C
Mathematics	B	C	D	E
Science	C	D	D	E

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

Standards in English have remained fairly consistent for the last four years and have been generally in line with averages for all schools and for similar schools. In the 1999 national tests for eleven-year olds, there was a fall in the number of pupils reaching the expected level (level 4) to below the national average. The number reaching the higher level 5, however, was above the national average, indicating that more able pupils are challenged and extended in English. This is still the case. Standards in mathematics have fallen since 1997. In 1998 there was a significant fall followed by a recovery in 1999, though this did not keep pace with the rise in standards nationally. In science the trend is similar to mathematics. There is reliable evidence to suggest that the overall ability of the year 6 pupils in 1998 and 1999 was lower than former and subsequent year-groups. Inspection findings show that standards in English, mathematics and science now match the national average for eleven-year olds, and are generally as would be expected. In information technology and religious education, standards are in line with national expectations and the locally agreed syllabus respectively. Targets set by the school for 2000 anticipate results in English, mathematics and science that are broadly in line with national averages. These are based on earlier test results and careful monitoring of pupils' progress. The resulting targets are both feasible and challenging. Achievements in all other subjects of the curriculum are satisfactory, and good in physical education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are good; they are keen to come to school. Most are hardworking in class, and kind and considerate to each other.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good. Pupils are friendly and polite around school. They respond to teachers' instructions, and play constructively when outside.
Personal development and relationships	The programme of residential visits encourages independence. Older pupils confidently carry out jobs around school. There are limited opportunities for pupils to take the initiative in their own work.
Attendance	Attendance levels are below average and unsatisfactory when compared to schools nationally.

Pupils' attitudes to work and behaviour are good. In a small number of lessons pupils do not concentrate sufficiently on the tasks set for them.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

There has been a significant improvement in teaching since the last inspection. In 97% of the lessons seen the teaching was satisfactory or better, with only 3% unsatisfactory. In half of the lessons teaching was good or better, with 8% being very good and 3% excellent. Very good and excellent teaching was seen in reception and in years 5 and 6, where it was often attributable to skilled specialist teaching. Teaching of English and mathematics is consistently satisfactory. Information technology and art lessons, criticised in the last inspection report, are also now competently taught. Basic skills in numeracy and literacy are taught well, especially the teaching of reading in Key Stage 1. The needs of lower attaining pupils are well met, with effective additional support for those with special educational needs. In some lessons the work set does not stretch the more able pupils sufficiently and opportunities for pupils to carry out investigative and experimental work are limited. In most lessons the management of pupils is satisfactory and good standards of behaviour are maintained. However in a small number of lessons teachers do not deal with pupils who are not working hard enough. Pupils' learning is most effective when teachers with specialist knowledge and skills set them challenging tasks. Learning is less effective when tasks do not match pupils' differing abilities and when pupils are allowed to become distracted and lose concentration. Teachers plan and prepare lessons thoroughly. There is a consistent approach to the setting of homework in basic skills such as reading and learning multiplication tables, but the approach to other homework projects is less consistent.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The breadth of the curriculum is sound, but there is a lack of balance between subjects. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and programme of educational visits.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	SEN pupils receive effectively organised support and make satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a need to organise existing arrangements for personal development into a more coherent programme.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils and promotes continuity in their learning through its very good links with partner schools. Procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance are unsatisfactory.

All areas of the curriculum meet statutory requirements, including religious education, but too much time is given to English. The school provides a secure and caring environment for its pupils at all times.

Links between parents and the school are good, with regular consultations about children's progress. Parents are welcomed into school for a variety of social, festive and educational activities, and a number help around school. The Friends of the School Association is very active and raises significant sums of money.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides clear leadership and has developed good relationships within the school and local community. The deputy headteacher brings complementary skills to the senior management of the school. Strategic planning is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities, but do not always have a clear view of the school's weaknesses. They are very supportive, have a good overview of financial planning and exercise good financial control.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school does not always investigate significant changes in performance with sufficient rigour.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes satisfactory use of resources. It deploys staff imaginatively, and obtains and uses specific grants effectively.

The senior management team plans developments, and evaluates their effectiveness appropriately. The monitoring of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection, but there is scope for greater involvement of curriculum leaders. Strategic planning and financial management are good including the application of principles of best value. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. Accommodation is good and well maintained. There is some shortage of resources in information technology, religious education, history, geography and art.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra-curricular activities. • The teaching of reading. • The school cares for and knows the children well. • Behaviour is good. • The school expects children to achieve their best. • Children enjoy coming to school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework provision should be more consistent, with more time allowed for the completion of some tasks.

The inspection team endorses the views of the parents. The parents praise the rigorous way in which the school provides homework in basic skills, but would like more time to complete some tasks so that their children still have time for after-school activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Children under five

1 Assessment carried out when children start school indicates that they have average attainment (just below the LEA average) on entering the reception classes. Attainment in speaking and listening is good; the children listen attentively and are able to predict what will happen next when a story is read to them. Attainment is satisfactory and sometimes good in reading, and in writing it is satisfactory. Children in the reception classes are on course to reach national targets for five-year olds. In mathematics attainment is in line with national expectations and the children make satisfactory progress. In all other areas of learning, achievements are satisfactory.

Key Stages 1 and 2

2 National test results for Key Stage 1 in 1999 show that standards were well above both the national average and the average for similar schools in reading, above average in writing and broadly average in mathematics. When the results over the last four years are considered, attainment in reading is above national averages and close to the average in writing and mathematics. There are variations in the performance of boys and girls in different years, but generally girls perform better than boys in reading and writing. Inspection findings indicate that the attainment of the present year 2 pupils is above average in reading and in line with national averages for writing, mathematics and science. In information technology and religious education pupils' attainment is in line with expectations for seven-year olds.

3 In the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the performance of pupils in English was close to the national average and a large proportion (27%) reached the higher level 5, suggesting that more able pupils are challenged in English. In mathematics and science results were below the national average. When these results are compared with those of similar schools, performance in English was average and in mathematics and science standards were well below the average. When the results over a four-year period are considered, standards in English and mathematics have been close to the national average with results in science below average. There have been large fluctuations in performance over the four-year period, particularly in 1998 when results in mathematics and science fell dramatically. Evidence from tests carried out by the school suggests that there have been significant differences in the abilities represented in different year-groups. However such significant variations are unusual and they need to be investigated thoroughly. There appears to be an overall decline in standards in mathematics and science since 1997. In 1999 girls out-performed boys in English and science and over time girls perform better than boys consistently in English. In mathematics the picture is one of fluctuations with no consistent pattern or difference between the performance of girls and boys. Observations throughout the inspection indicate that attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is currently in line with national averages. Targets set for current pupils are challenging.

4 Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported, and progress steadily at a similar rate to other pupils. In lessons where they receive extra help from a support teacher or other member of staff progress is sometimes good, as it is when pupils

are withdrawn for intensive work in small groups.

5 Standards of speaking are broadly average throughout the school and steady progress is made but pupils' achievement is sometimes raised significantly by skilled teaching. Towards the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils listen carefully and absorb information readily. Older pupils' command of spoken English is seen at its best when teaching is challenging and there is time and encouragement to express their thoughts.

6 Pupils make a good start in reading, reaching standards that are above average for the age group by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils make good progress in the early stages of learning to read because of competent teaching, effective involvement of families and a high level of commitment of staff. In Key Stage 2 English lessons provide a broad experience of literature that includes extracts from the work of Dickens and Shakespeare.

7 Standards of writing are average at seven and eleven. Throughout the school there is relatively little work of an above average standard, apart from the work of some high attaining pupils in year 6. Achievement is satisfactory overall and pupils make steady progress.

8 In mathematics standards at the end of both key stages are in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils of all abilities are competent in counting and recognising numbers. They carry out mental calculations to solve money problems at the start of lessons. Average and above average pupils can add and subtract confidently and identify halves and quarters. Pupils are beginning to use standard units of measurement for length, mass and time and can construct simple graphs. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils use all four operations of computation accurately. Pupils can calculate squared numbers such as $4^2 = 16$ and the square root of 36 is 6 using mental strategies, and they carry out addition and subtraction calculations involving decimal fractions in their heads. Pupils are able to calculate areas and perimeters of complex regular shapes. They collect and present data in the form of graphs and tables, but do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in carrying out investigations in mathematics.

9 In science observations throughout the inspection indicate that attainment in science is in line with national expectations. This indicates an improvement in performance at the end of Key Stage 2 since 1999. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils know about the important elements that sustain life in plants and animals, understand the need to test things fairly before making judgements and can classify materials into natural and manufactured in terms of their origin. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils understand how the heart functions and the part played by bacteria in tooth decay. They can recover materials that have been mixed with water using techniques such as filtration and know about a range of methods used by plants to disperse their seeds.

10 Progress in English is satisfactory overall with areas of good progress, for instance in developing early reading skills. Progress in science and mathematics is satisfactory throughout the school. There is room to develop the range of opportunities for experimental and investigational work in both subjects.

11 Standards in religious education are in line with the locally agreed syllabus. In information technology standards are in line with national expectations and show a significant improvement since the last inspection.

12 Numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced and all teachers plan their lessons well according to the timetable

indicated in the strategy. Where the teaching needs development is in setting tasks that are appropriate to each pupils' level of attainment. Also there is an emphasis on number work, with pupils given little opportunity to use their knowledge, skills and understanding, in the subject, to carry out investigations where they have a chance to show initiative.

13 Progress in all other subjects is satisfactory throughout the school with the exception of physical education where progress is good.

14 The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The school develops these basic skills across the curriculum and has begun to make much better use of information technology also. Literacy and numeracy sessions have provided the main focus for the monitoring of teaching that has taken place and this has helped to make the introduction of both strategies more effective in raising the attainment of pupils. The school involves both governors and the local education authority (LEA) in setting targets for scores in future tests in English and mathematics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15 Pupils across all year-groups show good attitudes to their learning. The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud of their school's achievements. In the reception year personal and social development is good as the youngest children settle into the routines of school. Pupils are conscientious and hard-working in class and appreciate the efforts of others. This was seen in an art lesson in year 4 when pupils were called upon to observe and discuss the parts of flowers. Respect for the feelings and beliefs of others is evident in many lessons and assemblies, and staff reinforce the importance of such attitudes. A particularly good lesson concentrated on the concept of 'neighbours' and pupils from years 5 and 6 described their compassionate feelings in the discussion at the end of this lesson.

16 Behaviour overall is good and is similar to the findings of the last inspection. Pupils are developing an awareness of right and wrong; they are friendly, polite and trustworthy, showing respect for others and for property. Behaviour in both playgrounds is good and there is no evidence of bullying. In the classroom pupils frequently help one another with their work, and co-operate and collaborate well. However, progress is sometimes jeopardised by the few, as too little use is made of behaviour management strategies to contain undercurrents of misbehaviour in some classrooms. In the academic year 1998 to 1999 there were eighteen fixed-period exclusions. This is an exceptionally high number for the school and compares with one in the previous year and two in the subsequent year. This exceptionally high number was a result of very poor behaviour of a group of final year pupils. Some pupils were excluded on several occasions for their behaviour. The school provided opportunities for pupils to improve and followed the recommended procedures closely. The behaviour of these pupils was reflected in the results obtained in national tests in 1999.

17 Many pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities available throughout the school. Equally, the educational visits and residential trips provide the chance for pupils to benefit from experiences beyond the classroom. Pupils are involved in daily school routines and are given increasing responsibilities as they progress through the school, including helping with the care and organisation of younger children. Opportunities for older pupils to direct their own work and to develop independent research skills are limited.

18 The school continues to encourage regular attendance and punctuality, yet recent

rates of attendance remain well below the national average. Equally the rate of unauthorised absence is above the national average. The majority of pupils arrive promptly for the start of the school day and lessons begin and end on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19 There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The teaching of information technology and art, which were found to be unsatisfactory in the last inspection, are now of a satisfactory standard overall. In 97% of all lessons the quality of teaching is satisfactory or better. At the time of the last inspection this figure was 87%. In half of these lessons the teaching is good or better, with 8% being very good and 3% being excellent. Very good and excellent teaching was seen in reception and in years 5 and 6. The strength of some lessons at the upper end of Key Stage 2 can be attributed in part to specialist teaching and the 'carousel' arrangement of lessons, in which good use is made of teachers' interests and expertise. This has a direct impact on the quality of learning and pupils' progress. The teaching of pupils in sets based on prior attainment in English and mathematics is also having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teaching is unsatisfactory in only 3% of lessons. Overall, teaching is good for children under five and satisfactory in both of the other key stages.

20 Class teachers are aware of the requirements of pupils with special educational needs, although they do not often refer specifically to individual targets when they plan lessons. Staff in general show a higher level of skill in managing learning difficulties than in handling pupils with behavioural and emotional problems. When the special educational needs support teacher works alongside pupils in class, they are effectively helped to participate in lessons which would otherwise be too difficult for them, and learning is often good on these occasions. When pupils are withdrawn from class for intensive teaching in small groups, the work is carefully matched to individual needs, helping to build confidence and boost progress.

21 The National Literacy Strategy is well established and teachers promote the skills of reading and writing across a range of subjects. Numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced and all teachers plan their lessons well according to the timetable indicated in the strategy. Where the teaching needs development is in setting tasks that are appropriate to each pupil's level of attainment. Also there is an emphasis on number work, with pupils given little opportunity to use their knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject to carry out investigations where they have a chance to show initiative.

22 The quality of teaching for under-fives is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was judged to be sound overall. Teachers know the individual needs of children. The skills of support staff are well used. Planning is very good. The results of assessment of children's progress are used to prepare further lessons. Planning clearly states what activities will be covered and which skills are to be developed. Appropriate support is provided for groups and individuals including higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.

23 In Key Stage 1 teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure and in Key Stage 2 it is sometimes good and very good. This enables basic skills to be effectively and confidently taught throughout the school and allows pupils to make good progress in the development of their basic literacy, numeracy and subject-related skills. Through the use of correct subject terminology pupils are encouraged to widen their vocabulary and develop and discuss ideas. The school has invested in an extended programme of training in the

teaching and use of information technology which has increased teachers' confidence and expertise in the subject. This is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' standards of attainment. Knowledge and understanding of the requirements for National Curriculum art, and how it should be taught, are not secure throughout the school and pupils' learning in this subject is intermittent. In lessons where subject knowledge is very good, such as in specialist teaching in physical education, pupils make very good progress and standards are good. One excellent English lesson demonstrated how the teachers' knowledge and understanding of a poem enabled the pupils to them to develop insights into the verse; they were given time and encouragement to think for themselves, and learning and attainment were very good. Resources are chosen to appeal to pupils and subjects are often presented in a lively way with pupils' interests and experiences in mind. A good example is that of a religious education lesson in which the teacher made the relationship between Jews and Samaritans more meaningful for pupils by equating it to feelings that may be experienced between two rival football teams today.

24 An effective common format for planning is used throughout the school. Lessons are generally well planned and clear learning objectives are shared with the pupils. This sets the focus for the lesson, motivates and helps pupils to concentrate and learn. Tasks are usually well timed and pupils are given time targets for completing work. Most lessons conclude with pupils reviewing what they have learnt and how successfully they have achieved the learning objective. A good example of pupils recognising and enjoying their achievements is that of a music lesson which was skilfully prepared and proceeded smoothly. Pupils learnt fast and readily achieved success. Occasionally the inappropriate pace of some tasks, such as an over-lengthy introduction, or unnecessary repetition leads to restlessness and loss of interest among some pupils which has an adverse affect on learning. Most teachers' expectations are appropriately high, and tasks are planned to challenge pupils at different levels of attainment. However, occasionally some pupils are not sufficiently well stretched. An example of this was a Key Stage 2 religious education lesson in which the whole class completed the same worksheet and the higher attaining pupils were not extended or given responsibility for their own learning. Similarly, in an English lesson in Key Stage 1, higher attaining pupils were not given the opportunity to use dictionaries to find their own words. The needs of lower attaining pupils are often met through the provision of additional support and classroom assistants are well prepared and deployed to provide appropriate support where needed.

25 Teaching methods are satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good overall in Key Stage 2. In both key stages teachers make good use of questioning to challenge and reinforce thinking. Questions are sometimes rigorous and demanding and pupils generally respond well to opportunities to share information and ideas. Teachers use direct questions sensitively to encourage responses from all pupils. However, in a lesson in Key Stage 1 instructions and explanations were unclear and this slowed down the pace of learning. Teachers are successful in grouping pupils in different ways to achieve objectives for teaching and learning. Well-structured introductory sessions are delivered to the whole class and this is followed by individual tasks or work for which pupils are often grouped according to levels of attainment or interests. Routines are well established and target groups for teaching are identified in planning. Teachers monitor work well to help pupils persevere and progress in learning and pupils learn to work with an appropriate degree of independence and to co-operate with each other. However, in one Key Stage 2 geography lesson too many pupils were in need of the teacher's attention at the same time. This had a negative effect on learning since a small group of pupils, unable to proceed independently, lost interest and behaviour deteriorated.

26 Resources are well prepared in advance and in one Key Stage 2 history lesson

sufficient materials were borrowed from the local library to enable pupils to carry out individual research. However, overall there are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to carry out investigative and experimental work and to take control of their own learning. Tasks are sometimes over-directed with pupils' contributions not being sufficiently well valued. This leads to over-reliance on the teacher and a stifling of initiative and creativity, as in the case of an art lesson in Key Stage 2 when pupils were led to believe that there was only one right way to respond in a painting lesson.

27 On the whole, the management of pupils is satisfactory and most pupils behave well. In both key stages expectations of good behaviour are often established. Most pupils respond appropriately and the good rapport between teachers and pupils generally engenders mutual respect and the development of self-discipline. However, not all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of behaviour and some lack effective strategies to deal with low level disruption from a small minority of pupils. Sometimes pupils who call out and chatter at inappropriate times are not checked and demanding pupils interrupt the flow of lessons. This has an adverse affect on teaching and learning.

28 Teachers closely monitor work in progress to help pupils to improve and to inform future teaching and learning. Levels of understanding are assessed through careful questioning and pupils receive appropriate praise. Plenary sessions are used to establish how well learning objectives have been achieved. Classroom assistants sometimes help in assessing pupils' responses to tasks and make notes on their attainment. Work is regularly marked but is not sufficiently helpful in providing guidance on how to improve.

29 Pupils are expected to read regularly at home, to learn spellings and tables and are sometimes encouraged to carry out research. However the approach to homework is inconsistent since much homework consists of completing tasks unfinished in class in time for the next lesson in that subject. Sometimes those pupils who finish their tasks well within the lesson are given additional work, which then has to be finished at home whereas other pupils in the class, who have worked more slowly, have no homework for that subject. This means that the amount of homework given is often dependent on the use of time in the lesson and pupils' pace of working rather than addressing individual learning needs. This may lead to parents' perception that the amount of homework given is inconsistent between pupils and classes.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

30 All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and religious education is properly based on the locally agreed syllabus. The last inspection report stated: "care needs to be taken to ensure that an appropriate amount of time is given to all subjects...so that a well-balanced curriculum is maintained". This remains true. English is allotted over one-third of the total teaching time each week, and more if account is taken of the contribution to the promotion of literacy skills in other subjects such as history and religious education. Information technology, on the other hand, is not taught as a discrete subject in some year-groups and is under-represented on the timetable. In years 5 and 6, a worthwhile initiative is allowing an afternoon each week to the teaching of religious education, information technology, music, technology and physical education. Each pupil experiences work in two of these areas for a block of six weeks and then moves on to another area or areas. This system offers good opportunities for pupils to benefit from specialist teaching. However, it is necessary to keep this arrangement under review to ensure that the curriculum in each subject is being fully covered and that each pupil over a year is receiving the same amount of time for each subject. The school compounds the difficulties of delivering a balanced

curriculum by having fewer hours for teaching in the week than are found in most schools nationally and only just enough to meet the recommended minimum. Furthermore, the timetable allows for some literacy lessons to last longer than the required hour and for the occasional ten-minute slot, for example before some assemblies, to be filled with silent reading activities. There is scope for a more rigorous use of the available time.

31 The curriculum is well planned. For children who are under five, work is focused appropriately on the required areas of learning. This enables them to make satisfactory progress towards achieving national targets for five-year olds so that they can move smoothly on to work within the early stages of the National Curriculum.

32 In Key Stages 1 and 2, all subjects have helpful schemes of work that assist teachers in the production of thorough termly plans. This is an improvement since the last inspection when design and technology did not have a scheme of work and when some schemes were in draft. Many of the schemes are now based on those recommended nationally and the school is well placed to implement Curriculum 2000 in the coming term. Co-ordinators regularly scrutinise planning in their subject to check that the curriculum is being covered. Checking pupils' books on a regular basis backs this up. The general interests and needs of pupils are addressed in the termly plans but, in practice, the weekly plans do not always address particular needs. This is especially true of the higher attaining pupils. Challenging work is not always planned for them and they just complete the same work as the rest of the class. However, the practice of arranging pupils in ability groups for English and mathematics in years 4, 5 and 6 is having a beneficial effect on standards. Pupils within these groups still display a wide range of needs and not all teachers appreciate the importance of planning different work to meet these needs. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is effectively organised, with all arrangements, including reviews, meeting the requirements of the national Code of Practice. Class teachers write individual education plans for pupils with minor difficulties, whilst the special needs co-ordinator produces plans for those with more significant problems in consultation with relevant specialists and the LEA's special educational needs support team. Individual education plans contain sensible, achievable targets for those with learning difficulties in mathematics as well as reading and writing. Most targets are clearly written and achievements measurable, helping to ensure steady progress. Where pupils have behavioural problems, however, targets are often too general and some are hard to quantify. In some cases objectives need to be broken down into less ambitious steps. All pupils are provided with an equal opportunity to learn and make progress.

33 The school has satisfactory strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Teachers are delivering lessons that are properly structured in accordance with the guidance in the Frameworks, though some lessons are unnecessarily long because of timetabling arrangements. Skills in both subjects are satisfactorily reinforced in other lessons such as history, religious education and science.

34 All pupils have full access to the curriculum. Extra-curricular activities are open to all, although there have to be waiting lists for some because of their popularity. The school provides a very good range of out-of-school clubs that are not just confined to sport and music. There are opportunities to play board games, to take part in gardening activities and to join a mathematics club. All teachers are involved in one or other of the clubs and this is praiseworthy. The school also has a very good programme of visits and visitors that have a positive effect on the standards achieved. All pupils make visits to places of educational interest. Year 3 pupils, for example, visit Lunt Fort in connection with their 'Romans' topic. Those in year 5 visit Bridgnorth to investigate why people decided to settle there. This helps in their geography studies. There are three residential visits, beginning with one night

away for year 2 pupils at Kingswood followed by a longer stay for pupils in year 4 in Llangollen and ending with a week's visit to Folkestone in year 6. This is commendable. The visits not only assist pupils' learning but they also help their social and cultural development in contexts other than school. Competitive sports matches also involve pupils in the wider community, and participation in the recent Wolverhampton Festival enhanced musical and dance experiences for the pupils.

35 Personal development is promoted through a well-planned programme of sex education. Pupils are taught about the harmful effect of drugs through the science curriculum. This is also the vehicle that is used to introduce them to aspects of health education such as healthy eating and the importance of exercise. Beyond this, the school does not have a written programme of work for personal, social and health education to support the school's stated policy and to help teachers in their planning. Work therefore lacks a long-term perspective and on many of the termly plans there is sparse detail about what is to be covered in each year-group.

36 Provision for the pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural education is good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education was judged to be sound overall. The school has clear aims in the terms of the values and attitudes it seeks to promote.

37 Opportunities for reflection are provided in assemblies and the school curriculum. During the day pupils are able to think about the meaning of life and share a sense of wonder. In their poetry pupils write about families, friends and homes to explain 'what really matters'. In response to being told that "God loves you all" a reception child said, "And the mums and dads too!" Pupils worship together, explore themes such as 'sharing' and enjoy making music. They can listen, reflect and respond to the mood of music or power of language. They discuss their feelings of excitement and anticipation as they look forward to an educational visit. There is a daily act of worship, which fully meets legal requirements. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was said that there were insufficient opportunities for pupils 'to reflect upon their own situations and on personal values and experiences'. A useful record is kept of the assembly themes that link to other aspects of the curriculum. Assemblies are an opportunity for pupils to celebrate achievements in their work, sporting activities and attitudes to school. However there is little time for pupils to respond, talk about their awards and how they feel about their successes.

38 Moral issues are well managed in assemblies and classroom discussions. Most pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and respond well to class codes and school rules that are prominently displayed. Pupils treat their school environment with care and respect. They listen patiently and sympathetically to the views of adults but they need encouragement to further develop their own set of values.

39 Pupils' social development is good. The school's provision for transfer to secondary school is a strength. Year 6 take part in Compact 2000 a project sponsored by the local chamber of commerce. Through a series of group activities including visits, teaching first aid and time management, teachers and community members help pupils to build self-esteem and grow in confidence. Pupils are set goals, which include punctuality and doing one's best. They are encouraged to talk about their worries and concerns as well as their hopes for the future. Pupils throughout the school are able to develop their personal responsibility through many tasks that they are happy to undertake. They tidy the library, greet guests and manage the hymn sheets and overhead projector in assembly. Watering the plants and litter-picking, often done on pupils' initiative, are all in a day's work.

40 Pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils are taught to appreciate their own cultural traditions through the study of literature, history, geography and environmental education. Visits both locally and further afield are a strong feature of the curriculum. Pupils have many opportunities to study the cultures and religions of other people. For example they visit a mosque and a cathedral in Birmingham looking at similarities and differences between the two places of worship. Pupils learn about festivals and celebrations in different cultures such as the Hindu festival of Diwali and a Christian wedding. Since the previous inspection, provision for pupils to learn about the richness and diversity of other cultures has greatly improved.

41 The school has very constructive relationships with other schools. Links with the local nursery are convivial and professionally valuable. They enable teachers in the reception classes to have a good understanding of the needs of pupils as they enter school. Similarly, links with the secondary schools are good and there are times, for example, when pupils can work in the science laboratories or the information technology suites before they transfer. There is also a very good programme of special events prior to transfer that prepares pupils and helps them to grow in confidence and to develop the social skills of working together. This is the 'Compact' programme set up by the local Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Engineers, architects and others engage pupils in activities that encourage team building. During the inspection, pupils in year 6 were involved in building a model of the Crystal Palace using sticks, canes and elastic bands. They were initially required to work in pairs, then in sixes and eventually the whole year group came together to create the model.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42 Baseline assessment is used to gain an idea of children's abilities as they enter the reception classes and to monitor the progress made by pupils as they move through the school.

43 The school uses a range of commercial and national tests and class assessments to identify higher and lower achievers. Despite this, some pupils are sometimes being set tasks that do not match their level of attainment and there are insufficient extension tasks provided in numeracy that fully challenge the higher achieving pupils. Information from assessments is used satisfactorily in years 4, 5 and 6, to group pupils by ability for English and mathematics. The school also uses the information to predict National Curriculum levels of achievement for pupils, and to make decisions about where it will target extra support to raise achievement in literacy and numeracy. However, the school recognises that these systems have yet to be fully developed and refined, both to track the performance of and set targets for individual pupils, so that they can be more fully involved in their own learning. Assessment procedures have been developed for all core subjects except information technology and religious education. These procedures involve teachers' evaluation of the work covered and the compilation of a collection of pupils' work moderated against National Curriculum levels at the end of each year. Assessment is undertaken as the need arises for individuals and differing attainment groups. The outcomes of these different assessments are used to inform future planning, especially in English and mathematics when sets are established and reviewed. The current situation is satisfactory, similar to that reported previously, except that the policy for assessment is now established and procedures have had to be rewritten to react to national changes and strategies in the curriculum.

44 Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported, both by class teachers and special educational needs support staff. Staff are helpful and alert to their general welfare,

so that the pupils' confidence grows and they make appropriate progress. Good links are maintained with a range of specialist agencies and with the LEA's special educational needs support team. The school has not yet adjusted in full to meet the needs of a growing number of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties, but staff are well aware of the need to tackle this developing issue. At present these pupils are not catered for as positively and effectively as those with other kinds of special need. There is insufficient focus on developing pupils' independent learning skills, for example in learning library skills and in using computers.

45 The school is a secure and caring environment where teachers and support staff provide satisfactory levels of support and guidance for the pupils. The headteacher and staff know their pupils, interact well with them and are responsive to their needs. Parents comment very positively on the commitment of all staff to helping their children make academic and personal progress. There was no evidence of bullying observed during the inspection nor was it raised as an issue by parents.

46 Policies and procedures to ensure the proper protection of pupils are in place. The school has a named child protection officer and appropriate first aid arrangements. There is a well-developed health and safety policy and a positive approach towards promoting this aspect of the pupils' welfare, both in lessons and around school. Levels of supervision at lunchtime are good and care is taken with the collection arrangements for younger children.

47 The school has reviewed its behaviour policy recently in response to a number of specific instances of unacceptable behaviour. Procedures to promote good behaviour through praise and reward are evident in school and sanctions to address poor behaviour are applied swiftly by senior staff. However, strategies to deal with low-level disruption in the classroom, which reduces learning opportunities for all, are not always consistently applied.

48 The school does have a number of policies for personal, health and social education, but this provision is not formally planned into the timetable. However, successful elements are addressed by the school, for example the 'Compact' scheme in year 6, which prepares pupils for their transfer to secondary school. Issues of health education including smoking, dental care and healthy eating are covered in the curriculum.

49 A serious issue to be considered by the senior management team and the governing body is the recent inadequate monitoring of attendance data. Inaccurate attendance data has been published in several external publications. At present this statutory responsibility is being discharged in an unsatisfactory manner. The school does undertake some monitoring of individual absences and persistent latecomers, but this activity also requires closer management attention.

48 The statements for children with special educational needs are up to date and reviewed regularly. Pupils are supported by additional staff, as required by their statements, in order to ensure that they receive their entitlement to the full curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49 The links between parents and the school are good. In particular, parents and carers appreciate the regular consultations regarding their children's progress. The value of these consultations is increased as they include an evaluation and target-setting review, with objectives agreed by pupils, parents and staff. Parents are also welcomed into the school for a variety of activities, curriculum evenings, open days, class assemblies, induction meetings.

50 Parents are kept well informed of school events through a regular newsletter that includes brief descriptions of forthcoming topic work. Parents are in the main satisfied with the annual written report they receive about their children's progress. These reports are generally clear and informative but there is considerable variation in quality. The best of the reports record achievements accurately and make it clear what pupils need to do to improve and progress. Others lack this detail.

51 A small number of parents help around school in various ways. In addition to the support they offer to classroom activities, parents help on trips and assist in various activities, for example the organisation of a mathematics game-lending scheme. Several past and present parents are currently training locally as classroom assistants, and the school is able to provide them with useful placements. The Friends of Oak Meadow Association is very active and has raised significant sums of money for the school. Its work is appreciated by staff, governors and parents.

52 Parents support the school in many ways and appreciate what it offers their children, both in terms of the formal school curriculum and in the wider sense through the varied opportunities offered by the extra-curricular programme.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53 The headteacher provides clear direction and good leadership; she is resourceful, enthusiastic and has developed good relationships with teachers, governors, parents and pupils. The headteacher and the new deputy have fused quickly to form a leadership team that has complementary qualities. The senior management team includes key stage leaders and they meet regularly to discuss whole school issues and developments, providing strategic leadership in making decisions about school effectiveness and educational policy. The senior management team has not always recognised the significance of data on pupil attendance or looked carefully enough into the trends and changes in the results of pupils in national tests. The current leadership team has made some innovative alterations to the delivery of the curriculum to enhance pupils' learning and make the optimum use of specialist teaching skills. In a policy decision to revise work it has established a determination to raise standards of achievement.

54 The school's aims are clear and published in many school documents. The commitment to work towards these aims is shared by staff and governors, and relationships within the school community are good. The school development plan is well written and constructed in the light of these aims, and sets out the way forward for the school in the long and short term. Weaknesses identified in strategic planning at the time of the last inspection have been rectified in that planning now has a long-term perspective and developments are carefully costed. Subject co-ordinators contribute to the development plan and help to decide how initiatives are to be reviewed and their success judged.

55 The monitoring of teaching and pupils' work by senior staff and subject co-

ordinators has developed since the last inspection. The focus of this monitoring has centred around the introduction of national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The monitoring of classes has helped to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and provided individual teachers with useful information for their own professional development.

56 At the time of the last inspection the systems for the appraisal of staff were judged to be inadequate. Since then the school has developed its own programme of professional development based on annual interviews and systems for evaluating both teaching and subject co-ordination. The information from this review is used to identify training needs for individual teachers and to plan a coherent system of in-service training that addresses the overall needs of the school identified in the school development plan.

57 The governing body is very committed and supportive of the school and fulfils its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. There is an organised system of sub-committees that report to the whole governing body, which meets at least once each term. Governors have begun to play a part in monitoring the work of pupils and some with special subject links have visited classrooms to observe teaching. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school, but are less aware of its weaknesses. In particular, they need to be more diligent in analysing information on attendance and the performance of pupils in national tests, looking for trends, comparing the data with national averages and investigating significant changes. The prospectus and governors' report to parents in 1999 contained inaccurate information with regard to the attendance of pupils.

58 The part played by governors in the financial management of the school budget is effective. The governors on the finance sub-committee in particular have a good understanding of the school's needs and the financial realities under which the school functions. The amount of money carried over from 1998 to 1999 was larger than average; however this figure was based on projected trends in pupil numbers and constituted sound planning to ensure stable staffing arrangements could be maintained. The most recent audit report found no serious weaknesses in the school's administrative procedures and the minor points that were identified the school is addressing. Day-to-day financial management is efficient.

59 Responsibilities are divided sensibly amongst staff and the inequalities identified at the last inspection have been rectified. Some curriculum co-ordinators have a good understanding of their subject. They have autonomy over the use of subject budgets, monitor teachers' planning, scrutinise pupils' work and have begun to be involved in the monitoring of teaching. Other co-ordinators are new to post and still require training for their role. In some cases co-ordinators lack an awareness of their subject in the key stage where they themselves do not work.

60 Provision for special educational needs is competently managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Documentation is up-to-date and pupils' individual education plans effectively monitored and regularly reviewed. There are good communications and close liaison between those staff most closely involved in special educational needs provision. The school does its best to manage administrative difficulties created by a number of extra-district pupils with significant special educational needs. Current delays in proceeding with statutory assessments are beyond the control of the school.

61 Information technology is used to provide the school with information regarding spending and the budget, and across the curriculum satisfactory use is made of information technology to enrich most subject areas.

62 The senior management team is very adept at obtaining funds from a range of sources to improve resources, facilities or staffing. Funds have been obtained from the 'Compact' scheme to help pupils moving on to secondary education, the local university for supporting trainee teachers and an environmental improvement fund. In its spending the school is cautious, employing the principles of best value. The governing body monitors spending carefully. The school has a more than adequate number of teachers who are qualified to teach the primary school curriculum. Good use is made of specialist teaching skills particularly in Key Stage 2. Teachers new to the school and profession are well supported.

63 There are sufficient resources in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but some shortage of resources in information technology, religious education, history, geography and art. In some of these areas resources were identified as inadequate at the time of the last inspection. Resources are well managed and used effectively to promote learning where they are in sufficient supply. Where there are shortages of equipment, learning can be restricted.

64 The accommodation at the school is good overall: classrooms are large, there are two halls and plenty of playground space. The school does not have an obvious area for a library and is currently converting a store room, which is not entirely satisfactory for the purpose. The information technology area has limited space, but is used well. The caretaker and his staff maintain the school to high standards.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65 In order to raise standards and improve the quality of education provided, the school should:

- (1) **Improve the systems used to monitor and record pupils' attendance to provide more accurate and reliable data for governors and the school community. Use the information to seek to improve the standards of attendance;** (paragraphs 18, 49, 57).
- (2) **Ensure that the data gained on school performance is investigated more rigorously to provide explanations for variations in annual results and to provide governors with a clearer picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses;** (paragraphs 3, 53, 57).
- (3) **Restructure the organisation of the school day and the use of teaching time to ensure a more balanced distribution between the subjects of the curriculum;** (paragraph 30).

66 Governors may also wish to consider taking action on the following lesser issues as part of their action plan:

- 1) Develop a whole school approach and scheme for personal, social and health education; (paragraphs 35, 48).
- 2) Rectify the shortages of resources in some subject areas (paragraphs 63, 96, 119, 133, 138, 142, 146, 151, 156, 165).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils not counting reading	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	8	39	47	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	385
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		56

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		88

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	29	34	63

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	28	26
	Girls	33	34	32
	Total	60	62	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (89)	98 (90)	92 (83)
	National	82 (77)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	29	24
	Girls	34	34	32
	Total	61	63	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (89)	100 (94)	89 (98)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	36	27	63

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	20	20
	Girls	22	21	21
	Total	41	41	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65 (74)	65 (61)	65 (56)
	National	70 (84)	69 (58)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	14	13
	Girls	21	19	20
	Total	31	33	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	49 (79)	52 (66)	52 (76)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	329
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	17	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	96

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998-1999
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	573255
Total expenditure	559123
Expenditure per pupil	1388
Balance brought forward from previous year	71388
Balance carried forward to next year	85520

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	405
Number of questionnaires returned	122

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	38	6	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	48	5	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	43	13	1	2
The teaching is good.	49	44	5	2	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	45	7	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	31	9	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	24	3	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	34	47	11	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	46	36	11	5	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	39	6	3	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	50	8	2	2

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

67 Children enter reception in September or January according to age and are taught in two parallel classes. The assessments conducted within a few weeks of entry to school indicate that attainment is broadly in line with that expected for their age. In the previous inspection the curriculum for the under fives was said to be 'well planned for pupils to develop knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum'. This judgement still holds. Assessment and record keeping are good and teachers' assessments are used effectively to plan what the children need to experience next.

Teaching

68 The quality of teaching for the under-fives is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was judged to be 'sound overall'. Teachers have a good knowledge of the individual needs of the children. The skills of support staff are well used and they work regularly with small groups of children. Planning is very good. Assessment of children's progress and current planning are used to prepare further lessons. Planning clearly states what activities will be covered and which skills are to be developed. Appropriate support is built in for groups and individuals including higher attaining children and those with special educational needs.

Personal and social development

69 Children make good progress. They have established good relationships with other children and they play well together. They are confident, feel secure and enjoy coming to school. Most children are able to share and take turns. This is because adults reinforce these skills throughout the day and set clear expectations of behaviour. Children are taught right from wrong and know the class rules well. They remember to say 'please' and 'thank you' and 'excuse me' and can address visitors by name.

70 Adults and children enjoy very good relationships and children respond well to praise and encouragement. They are very proud of their shiny 'smiley face' badges awarded for effort and good behaviour. Their contributions to lessons are valued and shared with the rest of the class. On several occasions children spoke enthusiastically about special things, which they had brought from home for a topic or a class discussion. Overall, provision for children's personal and social development is good.

Language and literacy

71 Attainment in speaking and listening is good. In reading it is satisfactory and sometimes good. In writing it is generally satisfactory. Overall children make sound progress and most are on course to reach the 'desirable outcomes' for children's learning at the age of five.

72 Language has a high profile in the school. A full literacy hour is taught in reception and children take part with enthusiasm. They listen attentively to predict what will happen next. They love the 'big books' and enjoy handling and reading the good quality books that are used for group reading. Opportunities for children to access similar books when learning to read are limited. Children make visits to the local library with their teachers and some also go with their parents. They can talk about the 'geography' of a book. They know

that it is read from back to front and some can discuss the bar code on the back cover. Some children know the reason for the 'contents' page and can use the words 'author' and 'illustrator'.

73 Children's response and attainment in reading lessons is good when teachers use skilful questioning. For example in one lesson children were able to contribute vocabulary such as 'fierce', 'timid' and 'shallow'. Teachers use children's contributions sensitively to develop their learning. In response to one child's question 'What are reeds?' a discussion followed with the teacher drawing a picture of reeds. The nursery nurse reminded the class that they had seen some reeds on their visit to Cosford Grange Farm. Educational visits support the children's learning in literacy and foster their enjoyment of literature. There are photographs of the children at 'Wonderland' in Telford where they learned about traditional tales and nursery rhymes.

74 Children are encouraged to take home reading books on a regular basis and enjoy sharing books with their parents. Reading diaries show supportive dialogue between home and school when teachers explain how parents may help their children.

75 Progress in writing skills is satisfactory. Children are taught to hold their pencils correctly and develop their skills through carefully structured lessons. Most pupils can copy sentences written by the teacher and some can write short sentences of their own. Children's letters are carefully formed and their work is well presented.

76 Sometimes opportunities for developing children's reading and written work are very good. In one lesson the teacher modelled story writing based on contributions from the children. The story was inspired by *A Dark, Dark Tale* which they had read the day before. The children decided to call their version *A Light, Light Story* and with challenging questioning the teacher drew interesting ideas from the children who were highly motivated. When they had finished children read back their story with a sense of pride. Their voices were expressive and they took note of punctuation such as full stops, capital letters and speech marks. They laughed with excitement at the end as they read '...there were some Ducklings!', raising their voices appropriately on the last word.

77 Teaching is good and sometimes very good. Teachers work hard to equip children with language and literacy skills. They encourage children to reason and to predict and use very expressive story telling skills. As a result, children have very positive attitudes towards their learning. They listen carefully to the person who is speaking and respond well to questions and comments from adults. They stay on task for a good period of time. They co-operate and behave well.

Mathematics

78 In mathematics children's attainment is mainly in line with national expectations for five-year olds and sometimes above. Overall they make satisfactory progress. There is a daily mathematics lesson that is based on the structure of the National Numeracy Strategy. Children are beginning to develop a mathematical vocabulary as they confidently use words such as 'shorter than' and 'taller than' when comparing heights of children in the class. They can also order and use the words 'tall', 'taller' and 'tallest'. One child was able to relate what he had learned and said, "My dad is taller than my mum". Teachers take every opportunity to reinforce their teaching. As the class leaves for assembly children line up in order of height. They manage this well. In an independent activity children were able to extend their learning to using the vocabulary 'heavier than' and 'lighter than'.

79 Children can sort items according to size, shape and colour and recognise common shapes such as a circle and a square. They understand the meaning of words such as 'before', 'after' and 'in front of'. They are beginning to understand the principle of measurement when they build their towers with cubes and make comparisons. They are developing a good understanding of number. They name and recognise numbers to 10 or 20 and most can sequence them in the correct order. In their everyday lives they are familiar with much larger numbers for example one child said, "What comes after 99?" There was a good pace in an oral and mental activity when children were clearly aware of the learning aim. They were challenged to identify a missing number in a sequence, for example 10, 11, 13, 14. They can give a number before or after four or 15 and are quick to spot the teacher's deliberate mistakes on the number line to 20. Higher attaining children can apply their knowledge during registration when asked to calculate the number present if two are away.

80 The teaching of mathematics is good overall. Where teaching is consistently good the teacher has good subject knowledge and high expectations as she questions the children. She ensures that all the children are contributing and that there is ongoing assessment by the teacher and nursery nurse. Attitudes of the children towards mathematics are good and sometimes very good. They can work collaboratively or individually and are able to concentrate to finish a task. They work well as members of a group allowing others to share and take turns. They show great enthusiasm for oral number work and are keen to volunteer their answers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

81 By the age of five children achieve national targets in this area. They make satisfactory progress in areas that provide the foundations for science, technology, geography and history. Children understand that plants need light and water for growth. They recently planted marigold seeds and observe their growth on a regular basis, recording findings in their topic books. The school environment is well used when children explore the grounds to see signs of new life and discover opening buds and flowers. When they find small creatures they watch them intently, careful not to harm them. They learn about a farm by visiting Cosford Grange where they are able to feed and touch the animals. Several times children referred to their visit and what they had learned, for example, "I've been on a tractor and it's big".

82 The children have a developing awareness of the area in which they live and go out to look at buildings, shops and transport and to visit the library. They learn about other places and people in the wider community. They learn about Mendhi patterns and design their own. Through comparisons of themselves as babies and themselves now they begin to understand the passage of time. Skills of cutting and joining are taught effectively but there are too few opportunities for children to explore and select materials and equipment. There is insufficient provision for children to develop these skills for purposes that they have chosen themselves. Effective use of information technology is limited. There are no opportunities for children to work with programmable toys. On occasions children use the computer only when they have finished their work. They cannot speak confidently about what they are doing and what they are learning.

83 Overall teaching is satisfactory in this area of learning. It is sometimes good when teachers focus on questioning and on providing independent learning activities.

Creative development

84 Most children achieve the 'desirable outcomes for learning' by the age of five. All children including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They use colours imaginatively in their painting and show developing observational skills. They enjoy working together, for example to make a large collage of the farm. In music children have a wide repertoire of songs and rhymes which they sing with enjoyment. During one lesson a small group quietly sang *Shalom* which had featured in assembly that morning. They can use musical instruments to keep in rhythm with the music and song. Creative development is promoted well through a good range of imaginative role-play activities and story telling. The role-play area is currently a 'veterinary practice' linking with the project about animals. Children show very confident social skills when involved in role-play.

85 Teaching is good. Adults support the children well by extending their language appropriately and providing new experiences. Children's work is well displayed around the school. This sets value on the children's efforts and promotes their creative development.

Physical development

86 Standards are in line with the nationally agreed levels by the time children are five and they make satisfactory progress. The children develop good dexterity by using a range of hand-held implements, threading beads and joining building blocks and pieces of construction sets. They use pencils well, making good progress in formation of letter and number shapes. During playtimes children are able to choose from a good variety of dressing-up clothes. There are also some books and small toys for them to use.

87 The children handle small apparatus in the hall with ease. The hall is well used for movement and physical activity but there is no large outdoor apparatus or suitable supply of wheeled vehicles. There is no outdoor play timetabled for the reception classes. The children are missing opportunities to extend their learning through regular exploration including balancing and climbing and the practice of skills using a range of small apparatus. The lack of such provision leaves a gap in their learning experiences both now and in September 2000 when reception classes become part of the Foundation Stage.

ENGLISH

88 Some important strengths have been sustained since the last inspection. Taking speaking, listening, reading and writing together, overall standards are well in line with national averages at the end of both key stages. The pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress in their spoken English and in writing development throughout the school. They make a good start in reading, reaching standards that are above average for the age-group by the end of Key Stage 1 and in the present year 3. Although this impetus is not fully sustained through Key Stage 2, the more capable pupils in year 6 achieve very high standards in their study of literature as a result of high expectations and challenging teaching.

89 Inspection findings are not fully consistent with the results of recent national assessments at the end Key Stage 1, but the differences are not great and can be explained by normal variation between one year-group and the next. In 1999, reading results at 7 were well above the national average and much better than similar schools, mainly because of the high proportion of pupils, now in year 3, who achieved or exceeded the expected standard (level 2). Writing assessments at 7 were above average in 1999, but this was not typical of previous years, when results were close to the average. Assessments at 11 broadly matched national results and those for comparable schools in 1999, but there was a wider spread of achievement than is usual in most other schools. In

particular, an above average percentage of the pupils reached a higher level (level 5). This is similar to the picture seen during the inspection. Significant numbers of pupils in the top English set are currently achieving high standards, but the year-group also contains a sizeable group whose attainment is somewhat below average. The gap in performance between boys and girls is no greater than the national average taking the school as a whole. Trends in test results over time are slightly upward, in line with the national pattern.

90 Standards of speaking and listening are broadly average when taken as a whole, with steady progress made, but pupils' achievement is sometimes raised significantly by skilled teaching. Towards the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils listen carefully and absorb information readily, acquiring new vocabulary as they go. Year 2 pupils, for example, have been learning about pond life and confidently talk about the small creatures they have studied. Others in the same year-group are developing the terminology they need to talk about language, referring to 'compound words' and 'sentence connectives'. The youngest pupils show good understanding by responding appropriately to direct questions. Almost all are capable of giving straightforward accounts of events that interest them, increasingly adapting their phraseology to the needs of the listener as they develop maturity. By year 4 able pupils offer relevant examples from their own experience to illustrate issues arising from a narrative they are reading together, *The New Girl* by Narinder Dhani. This is helping them to understand motivation and character in the text, as well as contributing to their discussion skills. Higher attaining pupils in year 4 are developing an awareness of differences between regional speech and the conventions of Standard English, for example showing sharp interest when a teacher challenged use of the form 'ain't'. Even so, some of the writing of average year 6 pupils contains many of the non-standard grammatical forms used in their speech. The older pupils' command of spoken English is seen at its best when the teaching is challenging and when there is time and encouragement for them to express their thoughts, building on the ideas of others. This was seen especially in religious education and literature lessons in year 6. No drama sessions were seen during the inspection. In one lesson, year 5 pupils were invited to speak in role as a given character, but they lacked confidence and found the task too daunting. Staff are aware of the need for further development, and are currently involved in a local project designed to raise the profile of speaking, listening and drama throughout the school. Planning for speaking and listening is not as yet sufficiently consistent through the school.

91 The pupils make good progress in the early stages of learning to read because of competent teaching, effective involvement of families and a high level of commitment by staff. Reading is effectively taught during the literacy hour, both in whole-class teaching and in guided reading sessions. By year 2 pupils develop a good understanding of how books work, and are starting to use contents pages, glossaries and indexes. They have very positive attitudes to reading and show a keen enjoyment of stories. Teachers foster this development, often using their midday break to hear children read individually. In years 1 and 2 all pupils consolidate their basic sight vocabulary and receive a thorough grounding in phonics and spelling patterns. As a result, when they come across unfamiliar words they attempt them systematically and with confidence. More capable readers break words down into their constituent syllables by year 2. Punctuation is carefully explained, and pupils attend to such features as commas and speech marks when they read. From year 2 onwards and throughout Key Stage 2, pupils' reading is expressive and well delivered. Teachers provide a good model when they read aloud, contributing to high standards of performance reading throughout the school.

92 English lessons provide a broad experience of literature in Key Stage 2, especially in year 6, including abridged forms of works by such authors as Dickens and Shakespeare as well as classic children's books such as *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* and *The Secret*

Garden. This is making a strong contribution to the pupils' cultural development. Older pupils enjoy and appreciate the texts they study. Many interpret what they have read with good understanding, as when they write about the relationship between Bill Sykes and Nancy in *Oliver Twist*. The pupils are taught to look closely at the text, drawing on evidence for their interpretation. By year 6 the pupils in the upper set have a good awareness of different levels of meaning and are starting to respond to the metaphorical structure of poetic texts such as Blake's *The Tyger*. They are developing personal preferences and taste by making their own anthologies of verse.

93 Pupils' personal reading does not develop as consistently as it does in technical competence and higher order skills. This is because they are receiving limited guidance about their choice of books and authors once they are reading independently. Although some of the best readers are tackling challenging children's literature at an appropriate level, others are not reading widely enough. Some of the average and lower attainers read within a restricted range. Most pupils have little idea of how library classification systems work.

94 Standards of writing are average at seven and eleven. Throughout the school there is relatively little work of an above average standard, apart from some work of a very high standard produced by high attaining pupils in year 6. Achievement is satisfactory overall, with steady progress through both key stages until year 6, when pupils in each set start to make much more rapid progress. Technical skills, including punctuation, handwriting and spelling, receive careful attention throughout the school and are securely taught, so that much of the pupils' writing is fluent and well presented. The main area of technical difficulty is sentence demarcation. Many year 2 pupils cannot place full stops correctly; indeed, in year 6 some average pupils still use commas where they need full stops. From year 3 onwards, abler pupils are starting to write in paragraphs, and paragraphing is generally well established by the end of Key Stage 2. Despite good levels of technical competence, however, there are relatively few occasions when lively or imaginative pieces are seen prior to year 6. There are some exceptions, including examples of exciting science writing and fantasies based on a reading of *The Jumblies* in year 2. Some effective work on narrative structure takes place in year 3, and work on *haiku* in year 5 has been the starting point for some effective poems. As a whole, though, too much work reflects the mundane tasks and exercises that constitute much of the pupils' writing experience. In year 5 there are too few opportunities for the pupils to redraft and polish their work, with unfinished pieces in some books. Writing in year 6 is of far higher calibre. The pupils gain experience of a range of genres, including biography and diary writing. The pupils' ability to adopt a viewpoint, sustaining different 'voices' is a strength. With explicit teaching, they learn to structure an argument, using words such as 'however' and 'thus'. They learn, too, how to write an articulate and appropriately phrased formal letter. Much of the best writing is inspired by the pupils' reading of literature, and here there is a marked increase in the use of adventurous vocabulary; one average pupil, for example, writes that the witches in *Macbeth* represent 'personified evil'.

95 The teaching of English throughout the school is thoroughly sound at both key stages, with lessons carefully planned and prepared to meet the needs of most pupils, including those with special educational needs. Some, but not all, staff plan more demanding work for the abler pupils. As a result, pupils' learning is invariably at least satisfactory, and better than this in some lessons. They produce a good quantity of written work and most take a pride in its appearance. Teachers show a secure grasp of their subject, with strengths in their understanding of technical aspects of language teaching. The national literacy strategy has been implemented in full, and organisation of the literacy hour is highly competent. During the inspection some of the lessons tended to be

unimaginative, and in one or two there was insecure management of the pupils' behaviour. When this happened, the pace of learning slowed. Good teaching was seen at both key stages, however, with one outstanding lesson in year 6. Here the teacher succeeded in sharing her insights into a Blake poem with the pupils, who were visibly moved by the text. Expectations were ambitious and, as a result, the learning was of a very high order

96 English is effectively managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator with a high level of expertise in the subject. Through her efforts the school is involved in a number of worthwhile initiatives including work on extended writing and a focus on improving boys' attainment. Systematic monitoring of English lessons took place last year, and some significant issues were picked up. Monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' written work is ongoing, but more needs to be done to disseminate best practice throughout the school. The most important area for development is the pupils' personal reading, with a need for better monitoring and guidance. Although book stocks are improving, there are still far too many books of indifferent quality in some year-groups, and too little thought has been given to the creation of a truly inviting environment for reading in each classroom. The school knows that there is a need to address the shortcomings of its cramped library and staff intend to seek a satisfactory solution when resources permit.

MATHEMATICS

97 Pupils' attainment in mathematics, in Key Stage 1 was in line with the national average and with the average for similar schools in the national tests of 1999. The proportion of pupils achieving at a higher level was close to the national average. This is an improvement on the previous year's (1998) results. Over a three year period there is considerable fluctuation in levels of attainment.

98 In the 1999 Key Stage 2 tests, pupils' attainment was below the national average and well below average when compared with similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving at a higher level was well below the national average. Over the last three years, results have gradually declined with a slight increase last year. The school explains that the overall decline is due at least in part to the attitudes and ability of the pupils taking the tests. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls during this time.

99 Inspection findings indicate that most pupils currently in years 2 and 6 are working within the standards expected nationally. This overall improvement since last year is due to several factors. The school is successfully implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils in years 4, 5 and 6 are now set by attainment, and pupils are grouped according to their level of attainment within classes in both key stages. Teaching has improved with the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. In the previous report it was noted that attainment was above average in both key stages. Since then the curriculum has changed and national averages have risen.

100 Pupils make satisfactory progress over time in both key stages. They make limited progress in using and applying their mathematical skills and knowledge, particularly in problem-solving because this is not taught routinely. They make better progress in their numeracy skills and most reach a satisfactory level by the time they transfer to secondary school. They calculate accurately and efficiently both mentally and on paper using all four computation processes. Pupils' progress in lessons at both key stages is good in half the lessons and satisfactory in the rest. Good progress is achieved where the teaching is of good quality, pupils have a positive attitude and the tasks set are demanding but achievable. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress towards the targets set for them in lessons and good progress when they are effectively supported by

specialist staff.

101 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils of all attainment levels are competent in counting and recognising numbers. This was clearly evident in all the Key Stage 1 classes, where pupils were successfully carrying out mental calculations at the start of each lesson. These activities ranged from making a number one more or less, in the reception class, through to the year 2 class where they were solving money problems. Pupils whose attainment is average or above average, can add and subtract confidently and identify halves and quarters. They are beginning to use standard units for measuring length, mass and time and to acquire the skills of constructing but not interpreting simple graphs. This was shown in the year 1 class where pupils had constructed a simple spreadsheet about their favourite foods, using the computer. A weakness in this key stage is that pupils are not developing their own strategies for problem-solving.

102 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are beginning to develop problem-solving strategies but teachers do not give this enough emphasis. Pupils use all four operations of computation and those pupils of above average and average attainment achieve a satisfactory standard. A good example of this was in a higher attaining group of year 6 pupils who were working mentally, as they developed a game of connect four using computational skills with three dice on a 1-36 grid. Higher and average attaining pupils successfully develop their knowledge and skills in the study of shapes, measures, and data-handling, within the limited opportunities that they are given. In year 3, pupils are developing an understanding of translation and reflection in patterns and producing these using the computer, and they are beginning to measure right angles accurately. Pupils in year 4 are distinguishing between two-dimensional shapes and their properties. The major weakness is that pupils do not attempt problem-solving activities on a regular basis. There is clear evidence of computer programs being used in the subject, which is an improvement since the last inspection, but this is still a developing area.

103 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with no unsatisfactory teaching. Of the fifteen lessons seen, one was very good, seven were good and seven were satisfactory. Previously it was reported that the overall quality of teaching was good. Most teachers have a secure understanding and knowledge of the subject and use questioning effectively to assess and extend pupils' understanding. In the previous report, it was noted that teachers set tasks that were appropriate to the level of attainment of each pupil, with an element of challenge, especially for the higher attaining pupils. This is not now consistently evident. Lessons are well planned along the lines of the National Numeracy Strategy, and learning objectives are invariably explained to the pupils. Teachers' planning shows how learning will be assessed and there are recording sheets for these observations. In over half of the lessons, especially where the lower attaining group in year 6 investigate area and perimeter, the teaching is lively and the lessons are conducted at a good pace. Most teachers manage pupils well and in most lessons pupils concentrate well. A few teachers use their marking to show pupils how to improve and to encourage them, but this is not consistent across the school.

104 Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are good in both key stages. This is a similar situation to that found at the time of the last inspection. In the few instances where there was disruption, this was due to tasks not being appropriately targeted to pupils' level of attainment. A large majority of pupils listen attentively, sustain concentration, and work hard to complete tasks. These pupils are clearly interested and involved and successfully apply their skills. Pupils work well both on their own, in pairs and small groups. The presentation of work is generally satisfactory.

105 Since the last report, the National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully implemented. The school is using national and commercial tests to assess pupils' progress. These results, plus teachers' assessments, are effectively used to organise different ways of grouping pupils. Tasks are usually set to match most pupils' levels of attainment, but this does not always include enough challenge for higher attaining pupils. Recently, information from these results has also been used for the setting of targets for individuals. Literacy skills are developed with the introduction of mathematical terms in all lessons, such as in the tessellation lesson in year 3. The quality of computer programs available to support learning is unsatisfactory. The school recognises this and is addressing the situation. Despite the limited resources available, information technology is beginning to be effectively used to support learning. The co-ordinator has monitored the work of colleagues and has provided a high level of support with the introduction of the new strategy. Resources are of satisfactory quality and quantity. They are easily accessible and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

SCIENCE

106 The results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 showed that standards were below the national average but well below average when compared with schools of a similar kind. Boys did not perform as well as girls, markedly so in this year compared with others, due to a particular group of disaffected boys. In the forecasting of these results, teachers were too cautious and were unduly influenced by these boys. Their forecasts were therefore low, particularly in assessing the number who would achieve the higher standard (level 5). In the years since 1996, results in science have declined. In 1996 and 1997 they were close to the national average and then fell dramatically in 1998 due to a cohort that was generally of poor ability, a fact that is verified by other test figures during their time in school. Results improved in 1999 but not by enough to recover the position of 1996 and 1997. Inspection evidence this year suggests that pupils are achieving average standards that equate with those seen at the last inspection. The improvement this year is attributable to some good teaching in upper Key Stage 2, to a revised scheme of work that has streamlined what is taught and to a programme of constant revision to help pupils retain knowledge.

107 Standards in Key Stage 1 in 1999 were assessed as average in comparison with national expectations. This year, teachers expect similar results, though one or two fewer children are estimated to achieve the expected levels. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils therefore are achieving similar standards to those seen at the last inspection. In their work this year, they have carried out a good number of investigations and, when talking to pupils, they can remember how they discovered that a toy car moves faster if the slope is steeper. Some of them already realise what they must do to create a fair test. They also know what conditions are needed for plants to grow strongly and that human beings need particular foods and exercise to remain healthy. They sort materials into those that are natural and those that are man-made. One boy explains that his cotton shirt comes from a plant with a seed-head that "looks like a snowball". Pupils also know that chocolate melts when it is heated and that water freezes and becomes ice. They are not secure

however in understanding how sound gets to our ear.

108 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a sound understanding of the various elements of the science curriculum. Work is presented very neatly but the use of information technology is not sufficiently integrated into science work, a judgement that the last inspection team also made. Skills in mathematics however are properly promoted through the construction of tables and graphs to present information and through the use of thermometers when conducting an experiment to discover the time it takes for 5g of salt to dissolve in different water temperatures. Higher attaining pupils make sensible predictions when conducting experiments and they use scientific language. In talking about the heart, for example, they explain the function of arteries and how bacteria attack the tooth's enamel to cause decay. Most pupils have a sound understanding of how materials can be recovered once they have been mixed with water. They explain the different ways in which plant seeds are dispersed and some know about the process of photosynthesis.

109 Pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages, including those with special educational needs. In year 1, pupils investigate which materials are attracted to a magnet and experiment to find out whether one material is more waterproof than another. Year 3 pupils grow seeds in different conditions and realise that the ones without water will never grow and those deprived of light will not develop into strong plants. In year 4, they investigate the effect of friction when a block of wood is pulled over different surfaces. In year 5, pupils test the effectiveness of different materials to muffle sound. Some pupils, such as those in year 4, have more opportunities for investigations and experiments than others, for example those in year 3. Some of the oldest pupils complain that they do not have enough experimental work and that there is too much emphasis on writing. A scrutiny of work across the school reveals that pupils of different abilities are doing the same work and writing it up in identical fashion. Pupils in year 4, for example, have matching accounts of an experiment for separating mixtures. This copying from books or worksheets, which is more marked in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1, makes it difficult to assess the true level of understanding of individual pupils and does not test their powers of deduction.

110 Pupils' attitude to science varies widely. In discussion with a group of eight year 6 pupils, only one put science near the top of a list of favourite subjects and two placed it near the bottom, because of the emphasis on writing rather than investigating. In lessons seen during the inspection however, the attitudes of most pupils are positive. They concentrate well during lesson introductions and are keen to answer questions. Year 3 pupils are suitably appalled when the plant that has been growing without light is brought out in a bedraggled state and those in year 5 express wonder when the embryo seeds are revealed in a daffodil head. During activities, they work well together, as in year 6 when pupils work in pairs to measure the stems, leaves and flowers of dandelions and compare the growth of plants growing in long and short grass.

111 Teaching is satisfactory overall though almost half the lessons seen were good. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and are good at introducing scientific terms and insisting that pupils use them. They prepare their lessons well, with appropriate resources that are put to good use to enhance pupils' learning. Some share the learning intention with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and return to it at the end. This is particularly helpful in developing pupils' own understanding of how much they have learned. Those in year 1, for example, are clear that plants have different sorts of roots, having looked at a variety of examples including a spider plant and a bean. There is, however, not enough attention given to providing different work in lessons to meet the needs of particular pupils and too often everyone is expected to complete the same task. This lack of challenge particularly affects higher attaining pupils. In a year 3 lesson, for

example, they sit quietly while the teacher conducts a lengthy discussion with the rest of the class, almost forgetting them. Many lessons suffer from too much direction by the teacher. Some older pupils point out that, even when they are investigating or setting up experiments, they are told what to do rather than being left to devise their own methods. It is important that older pupils and higher attainers in particular should be enabled to use their own initiative. Two lessons in year 5 illustrate this point. In one of them, pupils are allowed to dissect a lily flower to discover the ovaries at the base of the stigma. In the other, the lilies remain intact and the teacher tells pupils the facts. Pupils then complete a worksheet.

112 Teachers usually have positive relationships with pupils and control their lessons well. Only in one lesson did pupils cause difficulties for the teacher by constantly calling out answers. The need to constantly reprimand pupils slowed the pace and caused the introduction to be somewhat lengthy. Most teachers use questions effectively, both to stimulate pupils' thinking and to assess their level of understanding. Through their marking, teachers also assess understanding but the quality of marking varies and not all teachers make suitable comments that give an indication to pupils of how they can improve. Some marking is negative as when one pupil is instructed "not to waste time on pointless illustrations". Homework is occasionally given but this is not consistent across the school. Pupils in year 2 however are very proud of the booklets that they have produced at home about mini-beasts. One has downloaded information from the computer and the research that most pupils have conducted and their subsequent written accounts contribute well to the development of their literacy skills.

113 The school now has separate co-ordinators overseeing science in each key stage. This enables them to have a clearer overview of how the curriculum is being delivered. They scrutinise teachers' plans and pupils' work regularly to monitor how the curriculum is being delivered but do not have regular opportunities to observe lessons. A suitable action plan has been drawn up detailing future developments and the process started last year of analysing Key Stage 2 tests results is to be developed this year so that areas of weakness can be addressed. This is a useful initiative. A revised scheme of work has been introduced this year, based on national recommendations, and is proving useful in streamlining the topics that have to be covered. It is constantly under review so that it can be adapted to the particular needs of the school. There are sufficient resources to deliver the curriculum including various habitats in the school grounds. A new assessment system is about to be introduced. This supersedes a system that has proved time-consuming for teachers who had to write assessments for each pupil at regular intervals and indicate their attainment. A piece of work each year will continue to be included in each pupil's portfolio. It will be important that teachers continue to assess this piece of work against levels of attainment in the National Curriculum.

ART

114 Evidence from lesson observations has been supplemented by talking to teachers and pupils, looking at displays and planning. Learning in art is judged to be satisfactory overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were found to be satisfactory in Key Stage 1 but unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2.

115 At Key Stage 1 pupils use pencils, crayons and paint in support of topic work and record from memory, imagination and observation. They illustrate stories and poems, for example when making imaginative pastel drawings of 'Jumblies', and carefully observe their faces in a mirror when drawing and colouring self-portraits. Pupils use clay to make coil pots which they paint in strong colours. They talk about primary colours and how to mix

secondary colours and use shapes to print repeating patterns. Good use is made of the computer to explore shape, texture, colour and line. Pupils gather ideas for their own work by looking at the work of other artists such as Mondrian and William Morris.

116 At Key Stage 2 pupils continue to use mainly art in support of topic work. In a history project pupils look at the art of Ancient Greece and decorate cut-out shapes in the style of Greek pots. Small clay coil pots are made and similarly decorated. They paint large figures for display purposes. During a geography topic, pupils blend pastels to create impressions of sunsets after the work of Caribbean artists. Pupils carefully observe sprays of flowers in connection with a science topic. They pay appropriate attention to shape and colour and are beginning to develop a sensitive use of pencil to record their observations. Pupils are developing knowledge and understanding of the properties of colour. They are beginning to understand how the purpose of a work of art, for example a design for packaging, influences choices that are made in its creation. Printmaking, again inspired by looking at the work of William Morris, shows some progression from the previous key stage in that pupils attempt to link blocks of pattern. One class successfully develops the work to make prints from string blocks on sponged backgrounds. Pupils look at the work of artists such as Lichtenstein and Picasso and relate it to their own work. Pupils make sketches and select the appropriate medium before making their own interpretations of the work.

117 Pupils' attitudes to art are generally good. They are interested in the subject and, when given the opportunity, work with independence and show initiative. Pupils share resources and work well together. They generally appreciate each other's work and take a pride in their own. In one year 6 lesson using colour mixes, pupils responded in a very positive way to the teacher's obvious enthusiasm and expertise by displaying a high degree of commitment and enjoyment.

118 No lessons were observed in Key Stage 1 so it is not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching at that key stage. At Key Stage 2 teaching is judged to be satisfactory overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory in many lessons. However some of the shortcomings in teaching identified in the last inspection still exist in a few lessons. Teachers have sufficient expertise but there is some lack of knowledge and understanding about the nature of National Curriculum art and how it should be taught. For example, the use of sketchbooks is misunderstood. They often contain finished pieces of work that have been stuck into the book rather than a record of personal references, explorations and experiments that pupils may use as a source of ideas for future work. Although there is some discrete teaching much of the planning for the subject is topic led rather than based on what pupils need to do to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in art. For example, pupils' use of clay at Key Stage 2 is similar to that at Key Stage 1 and pupils do not build satisfactorily on the skills and techniques that they already have. This contrasts sharply with good practice observed at the upper part of Key Stage 2 where a series of lessons has been planned to develop successfully pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of colour. In these lessons opportunities are provided for pupils to show initiative and make considered choices; this results in individual and creative responses to tasks and good gains in learning. However, generally there are too few opportunities for experimental and investigative work in art. Over-prescription in some lessons leads pupils to believe there is only one right way and they lack confidence in their own abilities. Planning of individual lessons is satisfactory and teachers spend a lot of time supporting and encouraging pupils. Relationships and management of pupils are generally good and pupils try hard to please. In one lesson, however, pupils were given little opportunity to contribute to the introductory discussion which resulted in some of them losing interest. The low-level disruption that followed was tolerated rather than firmly dealt with.

119 The curriculum co-ordinator for art has recently been appointed and plans to review the schemes of work to help teachers plan for the successive development of knowledge, skills and understanding. The monitoring role is not yet sufficiently well developed for the co-ordinator to be fully aware of standards and classroom practice in art throughout the school. There are no agreed procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment in art. Materials and equipment for art are satisfactory in quality but the quantity is insufficient for a school of this size. There is a lack of reference material about art and artists specifically for pupils to browse through and borrow.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

120 Evidence from lesson observations has been supplemented by talking to teachers and pupils and looking at displays and planning. The quality of learning in design and technology for all pupils is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 1 pupils visit a playground to try out and sketch the equipment. When they return to school they draw designs and make models of equipment from construction kits. Pupils use card to explore the possibilities of making a picture with a simple moving figure and draw individual designs for the background. In designing and making puppets pupils look at existing puppets and make labelled drawings. They convey ideas for their own glove puppets in detailed drawings and write a list of instructions for making them. Pupils practise joining techniques and are successful in producing an end product that closely resembles their original ideas. They carry out simple evaluations of their work on completion.

121 At Key Stage 2 pupils are shown different ways of producing movement in pop-up cards. They practise cutting, scoring and folding paper before making an actual card which they decorate in an individual way. Pupils make two-dimensional dragons from prepared card in order to explore a linkage system of levers. As pupils progress through the key stage they develop knowledge and understanding of more sophisticated mechanisms and use wooden cams to create movement in a simple toy. They go on to explore pulley systems in construction kits in preparation for making model fairground equipment. Pupils learn about structures when they design and make shelters. Card, wood and recycled materials are used and pupils develop techniques in cutting, shaping and joining materials. Learning in design and technology has been developed as part of a project to help pupils prepare for transition to secondary school. The importance of teamwork and good organisation is emphasised. Pupils make structures from paper, develop techniques to increase load-bearing qualities and test them for strength. Pupils work together to make frameworks from cane to construct arches big enough to pass through.

122 Pupils' attitudes are good. They enjoy practical tasks and are eager to talk about their experiences in design and technology. They are well behaved and listen carefully to explanations. Pupils successfully transfer knowledge from other subjects such as science when connecting a battery to a motor.

123 It is not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 since, due to timetable arrangements, no teaching was observed in that key stage. The limited amount of teaching observed in Key Stage 2 was of a satisfactory quality. Planning was clear and provided opportunities for experimentation. Careful explanations and sufficient resources enabled pupils to proceed with some independence.

124 The previous inspection report identified a need for a policy and a scheme of work to provide a coherent structure for the systematic development of skills, knowledge and understanding. The school now has a policy and has recently devised a scheme of work

based on government guidance. The scheme of work has not yet been in place long enough to have a positive effect on teaching and learning and there is currently a lack of systematic approach to the sequential development of designing and making skills throughout the school. There are no procedures in place to monitor work in classrooms to see how well plans are being put into practice. A useful end-of-unit assessment sheet is being piloted to assist reporting and planning for the next steps in learning. Examples and photographs of pupils' work are being collected with a view to providing a portfolio of annotated work. The quality and quantity of resources are adequate but they need to be stored in a more organised and accessible manner.

GEOGRAPHY

125 During the inspection, samples of pupils' work were scrutinised, lessons were observed, teachers' plans were examined and discussions were held with staff and pupils. The subject provides pupils with opportunities to carry out focused research especially in planned fieldwork. This benefits the progress of all pupils including those with special educational needs.

126 Pupils' achievement is in line with national expectations by the end of both key stages and they make satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

127 By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils can talk about where they live and compare and contrast their environment with other places. In year 2 pupils make their first residential visit when they study Kingswood as a contrasting United Kingdom locality. They know that Ashmore Park and Kingswood are similar in size but that their own is an urban setting and the other is in a rural area. They are aware that houses surround the school and learn that farms are to be found around Kingswood. Pupils talk about different weather conditions and understand that the weather in England changes with the seasons. Pupils learn the names of the countries in the United Kingdom and use their geographical skills to plot locations and information using their own pictures and symbols.

128 By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have developed their skills, knowledge and understanding through the study of rivers, weather, settlements and environmental change. In the earlier part of the key stage pupils make good progress in their understanding of routes and maps. In year 3 they are able to examine the features of a modern village and suggest ways in which it may change in the future. One pupil, for example, thought the village of Worth might change considerably because of the rapid progress of technology. They are able to interpret some symbols on an Ordnance Survey map and compare and contrast the size of various settlements. Pupils in year 4 are able to recall a survey of the school grounds to discuss 'sheltered' and 'exposed' positions. The same pupils have recently noted similar contrasts when they climbed to the top of a hill at Llangollen. Pupils in year 5 understand the main features of a river; their learning was reinforced when they studied a model of a river and worked in pairs using a CD-ROM.

129 By the time they reach year 6 the pupils are able to plan a route from Birmingham to Folkestone, where they spend four days on a field study which strongly supports their learning. In Folkestone pupils study a seashore profile and visit Canterbury Cathedral, Dover Castle and the White Cliffs of Dover. They contrast Folkestone with Ashmore Park and apply their skills of observation, questioning, communication and hypothesis. They conduct a street survey and holiday questionnaire and suggest reasons for their findings.

130 Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. They are eager to learn and enjoy working in pairs or small groups. Pupils respond well to discussion and questioning. Their

work is well presented and map work especially is done with care and attention to detail.

131 Teaching is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. Work is planned on a yearly cycle and covers all requirements of the National Curriculum. Lessons are well planned and based on very good medium-term planning. Teachers share the learning aims with pupils and give good support. At times, however, work sheets are limiting and do not challenge higher attaining pupils. Occasionally teachers give too much time to pupils who are seeking attention and this loses some lesson time.

132 Geography is well led and managed. The co-ordinator has produced an effective scheme of work and is able to give good advice throughout the school. She monitors teachers' planning and pupils' work on a termly basis but she does not monitor teaching in the classrooms. There are good displays of pupils' work. For example the Llangollen project features pupils' written work, data handling, photographs taken with a digital camera, faxes to school and pupils knowledge of the Countryside Code. A 'Landscapes' display makes good use of ICT and uses geographical terms such as 'mountain', 'hills', 'plains' and 'plateau'.

133 Resources for geography are well used but limited in supply. In particular there is a lack of stimulating materials such as books, globes and current wall maps. The provision of educational and residential visits is a strength of the school, promoting pupils' learning and enjoyment of geography.

HISTORY

134 The steady progress that pupils were making in history at the time of the last inspection has been maintained. The subject has been consolidated because of the broad coverage of the curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 1. Year 1 pupils sort toys according to whether they are old or new and use words to describe them: 'dented' and 'worn-out' for the old ones; 'clean' and 'shiny' for the new ones. This exercise helps to extend their vocabulary and contributes well towards the development of their literacy skills as well as helping them to understand what history is about. In year 2, learning about a range of historical characters and events widens pupils' understanding of the past. Work on Florence Nightingale, George Stephenson, Grace Darling and Samuel Pepys, amongst others, is to be found in their books. In a lesson about the Great Fire of London, they describe key features of the houses and streets at that time and explain why the fire spread so easily.

135 Judgements in Key Stage 2 are based mainly on a scrutiny of pupils' books because history is currently a focus of work in only one year-group. Through the key stage, pupils develop a sound understanding of the required periods of history. In year 3, they learn about the legacy left by the Romans through a study of road-building techniques. In year 4, they use a spreadsheet to work out how much a servant in a Victorian household would earn. Year 5 pupils look at artefacts from ancient Greece and draw conclusions about everyday life by studying, for example, the pictures that decorate the vases of the time. As part of an impressive local history study, pupils in year 6 are looking at land use and ownership of Ashmore Park in mediaeval times and comparing it with the Victorian period and the present day. To do this, they have a tithe map and a schedule of ownership and come to realise the importance of original documents in historical studies. Pupils recall vividly their visit to the moated site. Similar educational visits are a significant feature of work in the subject throughout the school and contribute to pupils' enjoyment, learning and understanding of their cultural heritage. Visitors, too, help to bring alive the topics and year 4 pupils write appreciative letters to Professor McGinty following his visit and presentation

of life in Ancient Greece. By doing this, pupils are being given good opportunities to extend their literacy skills.

136 Pupils are keenly interested in their lessons and the oldest ones in particular concentrate well on the task of finding out who owned most land in the Ashmore Park area in 1842. When they colour in their map, according to who owned each plot, they are amazed to see how much belonged to the Duke of Cleveland. Younger pupils are keen to explain why one toy is old and another is new and they speak confidently.

137 Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are planned well and resources are imaginatively used to create interest and stimulate discussion. In year 6, for example, pupils download information from the computer about the River Nile to help in their work on Ancient Egypt. Activities are chosen to meet the needs of pupils. In year 1 some write about the Great Fire of London while others cut and stick pictures. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and, in a good lesson, suitable challenges are set so that pupils can use their own powers of deduction to discover facts for themselves from original source material. The lesson moves along at a good pace and a useful time is set aside at the end to review what has been learned so that pupils themselves can assess the progress that they have made. Teachers sometimes set end-of-topic tests to judge what pupils have learned, but this is not a consistent feature and there is currently no school-wide assessment system for tracking progress.

138 The co-ordinator is keenly interested in the subject and has been instrumental, with other teachers, in developing the local history material that provides such good resources for the lesson in year 6. She has compiled a new scheme of work based on national recommendations and this will be implemented from next term. Teachers already plan from a useful programme and the revised scheme is designed to streamline the work. Resources however are still not satisfactory. This was a finding in the last report and there are still not enough artefacts or good quality reference books in school. Teachers have to rely too often on the teachers' centre or on parents to supply resources.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

139 Pupils' attainment varies between different aspects of the programmes of study of the National Curriculum but overall it is close to nationally expected levels. Attainment in word-processing, use of graphics and data-handling is broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. However, attainment in other aspects, control, monitoring and modelling, is below national expectations. The purchase of new equipment and programs, and the recently opened computer suite is beginning to have an impact on pupils' attainment. This is good progress since the last inspection when standards were below national expectations.

140 By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have developed sufficient mouse control to use a range of tools in a graphics program. In the reception class they have produced, with support, maps of their locality. Independently, pupils in Key Stage 1, produce images by choosing colours, effects, and brushes and manipulate shapes within the program. As a result, by year 2 pupils are able to create pictures in the style of Mondrian. They use the keyboard and a word processor effectively to create simple text and spreadsheets. They are not rearranging the text and changing fonts. They handle equipment confidently, opening programs, but they are not saving their work. In the early part of Key Stage 2 pupils create repeating symmetrical patterns; spreadsheets in relation to their Victorian servants' wages topic; a variety of data-recording; and a mixture of text and picture as in their landscape work.

141 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils create posters about the character Bilbo Baggins; limericks with different fonts and colours; use CD-ROMs to retrieve information for their history and geography projects; produce pictures of plants for their science work; and create, manipulate and interpret spreadsheets. All pupils have access to some other aspects of information and communication technology including data, photographs, television and video. Currently, due to installation problems, pupils have limited access to the Internet.

142 Progress in word-processing and graphics is satisfactory at both key stages. However, at Key Stage 1 more use could be made of technology to sort and classify information, control other devices or investigate simulations. At Key Stage 2 pupils make limited progress in the use of complex enquiries, controlling events through simple programming or using the computer to monitor external events. This limited progress is largely due to the lack of hardware and programs. The school is addressing this issue. Despite this the development of pupils' skills has advanced to a point where they are beginning to be used effectively across the curriculum, as seen in the previously mentioned examples. Also there is clear evidence that pupils are making good progress in a variety of skills as they move through the school.

143 Only one specific lesson was observed, and here the quality of teaching was good. Teachers' subject knowledge and competence is good and they use appropriate terminology well. Since the last report teachers have put a lot of time and effort into improving their own knowledge and understanding of the subject. This conscientious attitude is now having a distinctly beneficial effect in the teaching of the subject. The best features of teaching are good management and pace to ensure pupils concentrate and good questioning to ensure pupils understand and are not just following a procedure. Discussions with pupils confirm that their attitudes to information and communication technology are good. Once more this is an improvement since the school was last inspected. They are interested in the subject and are enthusiastic to gain first-hand experience of equipment. Teachers encourage pupils' independent use of information and communication technology. Pupils listen to the teachers well and sustain their concentration.

144 Some short term planning does not cater for the range of pupils' attainment and when there are too many pupils at a computer it is difficult for them to collaborate and learn successfully. Arrangements for assessment and the recording of pupils' experiences and developing skills need to be developed. Work is not systematically planned from what pupils already know, understand and can do. These issues are currently under review by the school.

145 Management of the subject is good and shows improvement. Despite the restrictions of finance and equipment, and the change of emphasis in the curriculum for the subject, the school has made good progress in raising standards. The school now has a good scheme of work to support teachers' medium and short-term planning, with clear guidance on expectations in each year group to enable knowledge, understanding and skills to be systematically taught. The school now plans to implement the Qualification and Curriculum Authority scheme of work to ensure teachers' expectations are in line with those found nationally.

146 The school does not have sufficient ancillary equipment, such as data-logging and control equipment to ensure all pupils reach the standard required in these aspects of the subject. The school has benefited from the National Grid for Learning initiative, which is

increasing teacher and pupil confidence.

MUSIC

147 Only two music lessons were seen at each key stage, four in all, during the inspection. This evidence was supplemented by observations of the after-school music club and a recorder session, as well as recorded singing and a 'rap' performance. There were no opportunities to see work on composition, listening or appraising at Key Stage 1, but these aspects are covered at times in teachers' planning. On this basis, pupils' achievement in music is judged to be just satisfactory at Key Stage 1, and thoroughly satisfactory with some strengths at Key Stage 2. This is broadly in line with findings at the time of the last inspection, although the gap in achievement between the two key stages seems to have become wider.

148 Pupils in years 1 and 2 have a repertoire of simple songs that they know by heart. The words of songs are recalled well and enunciated clearly. The pupils listen carefully where there is an introduction on the piano, judging well when to come in. However, their performance in music lessons and assemblies lacks enthusiasm, and there are few dynamic or other contrasts. Most pupils know the names of some untuned percussion instruments and hold them correctly, striking them or clapping reasonably accurately in time with a pulse. Those year 2 pupils who take up the option of recorder tuition make steady progress, learning over a period of two terms to hold the instrument correctly and to finger basic notes accurately. They achieve a pleasant tone and can play simple phrases, which they perform with quiet enjoyment. Recorder tuition contributes well to the musical development of those pupils concerned.

149 Older pupils are far more confident and accomplished musicians. With the regular accompaniment of a pupil on percussion as well as the piano, most assembly singing is lively and enthusiastic. In lessons pupils in years 5 and 6 participate unselfconsciously in a range of warm-up activities, vocal work in several parts and improvisation using pitched percussion instruments. When listening to unfamiliar music, they are quick to pick out repetitions and other elements of structure. In a year 5 lesson, the pupils listened to an African song, which they readily identified as such, quickly learned the melody and then performed the piece as a round over a backing tape. Progress was good in this session. The pupils instinctively captured the tonal quality and timbre of the piece, and listened to one another sensitively as additional melodic layers were added. In another session, year 6 pupils used glockenspiels and xylophones to improvise over a given sequence of harmonies, achieving modest success even though most improvisations were stronger on rhythm than melody. The ability to listen critically to their own work needs to be developed further with this group.

150 There are differences between key stages in the quality of teaching, as at the time of the last inspection. On the basis of the two lessons observed at each key stage, the indications are that teaching is only just satisfactory at Key Stage 1 but good at Key Stage 2, where there is strong expertise in the subject. The handful of lessons seen ranged from unsatisfactory to very good. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, the pace of the lesson was slow and class control not firm enough, with the result that most pupils did too little. Shared control between the pianist and class teacher created practical difficulties, and little was done to improve the quality of the pupils' singing. Features of the best teaching include strong relationships with the pupils, effortless control and a focus on full participation and enjoyment. There was very good planning and preparation of resources. The pupils respond very positively in these circumstances, working hard and with obvious pleasure.

151 The music curriculum is enriched for some of the older pupils by opportunities to join with others in festivals and celebrations, as in a recent Millennium production performed by local schools. There are sometimes opportunities to go further afield, for example to join in events at Symphony Hall in Birmingham. Some pupils have the opportunity to learn violin during school time. Overall, music is making a good contribution to the pupils' personal and cultural development at Key Stage 2, but needs to be strengthened at Key Stage 1. For both key stages there is a need to overhaul the school's collection of recorded music to develop further listening and appraising.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

152 At the time of the last inspection the progress made by pupils was judged to be satisfactory. Current pupils make good progress in physical education throughout the school. The introduction that pupils receive in the reception classes is built on in Key Stage 1 where they have access to gymnastic activities using indoor equipment in the hall. Key Stage 1 pupils develop basic ball skills and learn how to respond imaginatively in music and movement lessons. In Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment in swimming and games is good; most pupils exceed the national expectation for swimming. Pupils in year 6 can swim using a range of strokes, perform surface dives and develop good attitudes to water safety. In games they already have tennis and cricket skills that are well developed for their age. Pupils in year 6 learn about the effects of exercise on their bodies such as raised pulse and heart rate; they develop good attitudes towards warming up and preparing muscles for exercise and show an awareness of health-related fitness.

153 Pupils' attitudes in physical education are good and often very good. They enjoy the lessons, work hard and co-operate well in groups. Pupils are encouraged to help in the taking out and putting away of equipment and behave well when travelling to and from lessons.

154 Teaching in physical education is at least satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. At the time of the last inspection some teachers found the management of pupils difficult, but observations throughout this inspection found the management and control of pupils to be good. Where teaching is very good, teachers have very good knowledge of how to teach techniques to enhance pupils' skills such as tennis strokes or gymnastic movements. Lessons are planned that teach pupils skills that are then applied in games and competitive situations. In some lessons the warm up session needs to be more vigorous. Teaching is improved through the use of specialist teaching in the compact programme and during the carousel session for pupils in years 5 and 6.

155 The physical education curriculum is well planned. The documentation provides good support for teachers and ensures that pupils have access to a balanced curriculum. The curriculum is extended through a very good programme of extra-curricular activities and competitive sports. The school fields teams in a range of sports and is very successful in local and district cross country competitions.

156 The school benefits from having two halls, good hard play areas and access to large playing fields. Resources are adequate for most activities though in some lessons the number of mats for gymnastics is insufficient.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

157 Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. It is in line with standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus that is being followed by the school.

Standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. The progress made by pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory.

158 By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have a basic awareness that there are aspects of life which are 'special' and have some knowledge of major world religions including the Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths. They know stories of famous figures from these religions such as Jesus, Rama and Sita, Muhammad and Guru Nanak. Pupils understand that religions have various ceremonies and special occasions; for example they know the importance of Diwali to Hindus and Easter to Christians. Pupils know that they come from a variety of religious and family backgrounds and value the importance of family and friends. They are aware of the need for caring for people and their environment and can discuss this in their lessons and assemblies.

159 By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils know a range of stories from the world faiths. They can identify and discuss similarities and differences between religions such as in clothing, food and ceremonies. They can contribute to a discussion about similarities in the teaching of great leaders. For example they know that both Jesus and Guru Nanak taught the importance of caring for others. Pupils name various religious buildings such as a church, a temple, a mosque and a synagogue. They talk about some requirements for entering these buildings such as removing shoes or covering one's head. Year 3 pupils visited a mosque and cathedral in Birmingham to compare and contrast Muslim and Christian buildings. Such visits help pupils to relate class work to real places of worship and this clearly develops their understanding.

160 Pupils are interested in their work and enjoyed discussing information that they had extracted from the story of the Creation in the Good News Bible. It was difficult to remember the sequence in which God created the world, but higher attaining pupils in year 3 were able to skim the passage to find out for themselves.

161 Pupils show respect for the views of others and they are prepared to listen to different opinions, sometimes amending their own views as a consequence. In a year 5 class most pupils initially identified neighbours as 'friends' or 'people living next door' but later changed their views to recognise that, in the Bible, a neighbour is a person who will help anyone regardless of race or religion. Pupils could talk about 'compassion' and described it as 'love', 'honour', 'respect' and 'showing others that you care'. Their social and moral awareness was heightened as they expressed their own feelings of sympathy and care.

162 Teaching in both key stages is generally satisfactory and one excellent lesson was seen in year 5. Lessons are well planned and reflect the units of study in the agreed syllabus. Teachers have good subject knowledge and share the learning aims of the lessons with their pupils. They make good use of questioning to check and reinforce previous lessons. However levels of expectation are variable. Some work in year 2 lacks pace and challenge and there are insufficient opportunities to question or give personal opinions. This is better in years 5 and 6 when pupils are encouraged to give their own ideas and state their reasons.

163 Pupils' attitudes to the teaching of religious education are good and generally they are well behaved. They find the subject interesting and make a variety of observations especially when discussing their views about God or the need for rules in everyday life. Most pupils listen attentively to stories in assemblies and lessons. During periods of reflection they are quiet and focused.

164 The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator has a clear overview of the curriculum and monitors teachers' planning on a termly basis although there are no opportunities at the moment to monitor the teaching of religious education in the classrooms. There is a portfolio with examples of pupils' work from reception to year 6. The policy and scheme of work are good giving useful support for teachers' planning.

165 Resources for learning are variable. There is a good supply of books, photographs and posters and the co-ordinator has recently purchased a set of Bibles for year 6. However there is a shortage of good quality religious artefacts for pupils to handle in their lessons.

166 Work undertaken in religious education makes a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. It interests them in important issues, develops their thinking and encourages them to express their personal views. They show a growing spiritual awareness and sensitivity to the needs of others.