

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MERE GREEN COMBINED SCHOOL**

Mere Green, Sutton Coldfield

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103389

Headteacher: Mr. P. Humphreys

Reporting inspector: Mr. T. Neat  
20007

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th June 2000

Inspection number: 189790

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Mere Green Road Sutton Coldfield West Midlands
Postcode:	B75 5BL
Telephone number:	0121 308 1384
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. C. Schneider
Date of previous inspection:	14th October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr. T. Neat	Registered inspector	Science	What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards?
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Mr. J. Bayliss	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mrs. T. Cotton	Team inspector	English	
		Music	
		Special educational needs	
		English as an additional language	
Mr. T. Dolan	Team inspector	Information and communications technology	Additional features specified for inspection: The Speech & Language Resource Base
Mr. G.Logan	Team inspector	Mathematics	
		Physical education	
Mrs. B. Thomas	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		History	
		Under fives	
Mrs. E. Walker	Team inspector	Art	
		Design and technology	
		Religious education	
		Equal opportunities	

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<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Mere Green Combined School is larger than most primary schools. It has 267 pupils on roll, compared with the average size of 226. Most of the pupils in the main body of the school come from the area immediately surrounding the school. This area does not share the same characteristics as the rest of the electoral ward. The housing is a mixture of council owned and privately owned properties. Many of the privately owned properties were formerly council houses. The children attending the nursery come from a wider area. Relatively few of the children attending the nursery join the school's reception class. Those attending the Speech and Language Resource Base located at the school are drawn from different parts of Birmingham. 26 children attend the nursery full-time and another 35 attend part-time. At the time of the inspection there were 3 children in the reception class who were under five. The attainment of children on entry to the nursery is broadly in line with that found nationally. The Speech and Language Resource Base serves 16 pupils, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. In the school as a whole, the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is a bit higher than in most schools. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is well above the national average. A large number of pupils move into or out of the school at times other than the usual ones.

## **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Mere Green Combined is an effective school, with many strengths and some excellent features. A number of factors, including high levels of pupil mobility, depress standards as measured by national averages, but the achievement of most pupils is at least satisfactory and for many it is good. The school has improved well since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the school are strong and the quality of teaching is good. The school is judged to give satisfactory value for money.

### **What the school does well**

- It provides a high level of care and support for its pupils.
- There is extremely effective provision for pupils in the Speech and Language Resource Base.
- It works very well in partnership with parents.
- There is very good nursery provision leading to good progress for the under fives.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- Leadership and management are strong, The strategic use of resources is very good and the governing body plays its part very well.

### **What could be improved**

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are not high enough.
- Better use could be made of assessment information to inform teachers' planning, and the marking of pupils' work could be more consistent.
- The identification of the progress made by the body of pupils who complete all of their primary education at the school.
- Procedures for monitoring the quality of teachers' work are not sufficiently systematic.

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

In drawing up their action plan, the governing body should also review the lesson hours, which currently fall below the recommended minimum at both key stages. In addition, the school should review the use of worksheets to frame and record pupils' tasks.

## **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in October 1996. It has made good progress since then. Standards have risen at Key Stage 2, especially in information and communications technology, and also in art and music. The key issues identified in the last inspection report have been addressed effectively. The time before assembly has been reduced and it is now used well. More opportunities have been created to enable pupils to develop skills of independent research, investigation and problem solving. Praise is now well directed. Teachers generally make effective provision for the higher attaining pupils in lessons. Separate teaching in small groups is laid on for them and this helps standards to improve. The provision for promoting pupils' spiritual development is now good. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. The links with partner institutions, especially the Four Oaks Cluster of schools are now more effective. The provision in the Nursery is now even better. Considerable improvements have been made to the quality of the accommodation.

## 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	D	C	D	E
Mathematics	D	C	E	E
Science	E	B	E	E*

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

**The results in the table above do not accurately reflect the school's performance.** They take no account of several factors that seriously affect the school's ability to compete against other schools. For example, the grades at Key Stage 1 include the results of pupils who attend the Speech and Language Resource Base, all of whom have statements of special educational needs. At both key stages there are higher than average proportions of mainstream pupils with special educational needs. The number of pupils who move into and out of the school at times other than the normal is also high. For instance, of the pupils taking the national tests in Year 6 last year, only about half had been in school for the two years preceding the tests. Furthermore, the school is very close to the benchmarked group for the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, that is above its present position. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily, and many of them make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Those for whom English is an additional language learn at similar rate to other pupils. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in mathematics is broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages, but below in science. In English at Key Stage 1, standards in speaking and listening are broadly in line with national expectations, but below in reading and writing. Those at the end of Key Stage 2 attain below national expectations in English. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils attain standards in information and communications technology that are well above national expectations, and above those expected of their age group in art and design and technology. Standards in music are above the expected levels at the end of both key stages. In all other subjects pupils achieve standards that are in line with those expected of their age group. The fluctuating effects, year on year, of the factors already described, mean that there is no uniform trend of improvement in the school's results. These variables make the identification of trends very difficult. Comparisons which are based on national averages for all schools, and for schools with similar levels of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, are unreliable. The table above shows that in 1999, the results attained in English were below the national average for all schools and well below the average for similar schools. In mathematics, the results were well below the national average for all schools and for similar schools. Performance in science was well below the national average for all schools, and very low when compared to similar schools.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils throughout the school have good attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is always at least satisfactory. There is no evidence of bullying.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good. They are courteous, helpful and sensitive to each other's needs. Relationships are very good. Pupils co-operate well with each other in lessons.
Attendance	The rate of attendance is satisfactory. The level of unauthorised absence is low.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. All of the teaching was satisfactory or better. In more than seven lessons in every ten the quality of teaching is good, and in three in ten, it is very good. Teaching in the Speech and Language Resource Base is of a high standard. The quality of teaching of English is good. In mathematics it is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively. Teachers' skills in managing their classes are good. Their knowledge and understanding of what they teach are also good. Overall, the differing needs of pupils are met. However, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent, and does not give enough guidance about how they can improve. The teaching of art, design and technology, music, and physical education was good in the lessons observed. In all other subjects, it was satisfactory.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum for under fives is very good. The curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 is broad, generally balanced and relevant to pupils' needs and interests. The provision of extra curricular activities remains very good. However, some of the planning does not always ensure that pupils gain skills, knowledge and understanding progressively. Lesson hours do not meet the recommended minimum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Appropriate targets are identified in pupils' individual education plans and are reviewed regularly.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils receive appropriate support and make progress similar to other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, overall. There is very good provision for social development. The recently formed school council gives pupils good opportunities for showing initiative. The school promotes the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	All members of the school community work together to provide a very caring environment. The measures that are in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The use of assessment information to inform teachers' planning is still not fully effective.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents?	The school works very well with parents. This is a strength of the school. Parents involve themselves very well in the life of the school and contribute very well to their children's education. Further strengths are the contribution of the community to pupils' learning and the benefits derived from the school's involvement with the local "cluster" of schools. Good links with the nearby secondary school help to ensure a smooth transition to the next phase of education.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives clear direction to the work of the school. He is ably supported by the assistant headteacher. The senior management team plays a full role in determining whole school issues. The headteacher has led the school very well in creating an open, positive and forward-looking ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very effective. It fulfils its responsibilities very well. The governors are very supportive of the school. Statutory requirements are fully met. The governing body understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. The principles of best value are applied well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school monitors and evaluates its performance effectively. In-depth analyses are made of standards. Appropriate action is taken to raise standards. However, procedures for monitoring the quality of teachers' work are not yet sufficiently systematic.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. There is very effective corporate decision making to ensure that the financial resources available are properly targeted to improve standards. The financial planning process is well organised. Excellent use is made of new technologies. The governors take an active part in formulating the budget. More account could be taken of national information when measuring the school's performance. The school is well staffed in relation to the numbers on roll. The accommodation meets the needs of the curriculum very well. The quality and quantity of learning resources impacts well on teaching and learning.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress at school.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good and there is no bullying.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• They feel well informed about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable in approaching staff with problems and concerns.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to do their best.</li> <li>• The school works very well with parents.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework. Although some want more, others less.</li> <li>• Large class sizes.</li> </ul>

Parents hold the headteacher, governors and staff in high esteem. They are very strongly supportive of the school. In the main the inspection findings confirm the positive views of parents. No evidence was found to support the negative view about homework provision that inspectors' judged to be appropriate. The school takes the view that large class sizes are preferable to mixed age groupings. Extra classroom support staff have been allocated to the classes in question and the pupils make secure progress all round.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. At first glance, the school's results for English, mathematics and science appear to show that it is underperforming. However, there are many factors that affect the school's performance as measured by the National Curriculum tests. These include the presence of the Speech and Language Resource Base, which caters for 16 pupils, all of whom have statements of special educational needs. The Key Stage 1 results, published nationally, include the attainment of these pupils. This seriously distorts the picture of how well the pupils not attending the base are doing. For example, of the Year 2 cohort taking the tests in 1998, about a quarter were attending the base. The results at both key stages are affected by other factors, too. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual. For example, about half of the Year 6 cohort in 1999 did not start Key Stage 2 together. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, other than those in the Speech and Language Resource Base, is often much higher than the proportion found nationally. For instance, more than a third of the pupils in Year 6 in 1999 were on the school's special educational needs register. At the moment, the Speech and Language Resource Base only caters for pupils at Key Stage 1, but overall levels of attainment at Key Stage 2 are also affected by the significant number of pupils who leave the base, but stay on at the school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is at a level that is very close to the benchmarked group above its current designation for comparing the standards of similar schools. Several long-term illnesses of teachers have also disrupted the school's work.
2. The results of the national tests in 1999, show that attainment in reading and writing, at Key Stage 1, was broadly in line with both the average for all schools, and for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. In mathematics, attainment was well below both the average for all schools and the average for similar schools. At Key Stage 2 in 1999, the results attained in English were below the national average for all schools and well below the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. In mathematics, the results were well below the national average for all schools and for similar schools. Performance in science was well below the national average for all schools, and very low when compared with similar schools.
3. Fluctuations in the severity of these factors make the identification of trends in the pupils' performance, year on year, difficult. Comparisons with the national averages for all schools, and schools with similar levels of eligibility for free school meals, are unreliable. There has been no clear trend of improvement in the results of national tests over the last four years. This is due to the marked differences between the successive cohorts of pupils taking the tests. For example, in 1998, the science results at Key Stage 2 were above the national average for all schools, but in the following year, of the group taking the test, only about half had been in the school for the two years leading up to the tests. In that year, the results were poor, even when compared with schools that had a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.
4. The evidence collected by the inspection team is based largely on the scrutiny of samples of pupils' past work and the standards observed in lessons. It is therefore subject to many of the factors identified above.
5. The school has set challenging targets for improvement in this year's national tests. Its own detailed analysis, of both National Curriculum and standardised tests, shows that the school is successful in adding value to the attainment of mainstream pupils, most of whom either achieve or exceed the targets set for them. The majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily, overall. Moreover, the standards achieved by pupils in other subjects are frequently better than those expected of their age group. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is well above national expectations in information and communications technology, and above age-related expectations in art, design and technology and music.
6. Pupils with special educational needs attain standards that are satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment and the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve standards similar to most other children.

7. Inspection evidence indicates that at the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is in line with national expectations in speaking and listening, but below in reading and writing. Average attaining pupils in the current cohort at the end of Key Stage 2 attain below national expectations in English. Pupils listen attentively and are interested in what others have to say. Older pupils are becoming more competent at speaking and are starting to be more precise in choosing their words. Attainment is stronger in some classes, such as Year 1 and Year 3, where it is broadly average. By seven, pupils read accurately, but not yet fluently. They use letter sounds well to read unfamiliar words. At Key Stage 2, pupils read with deeper understanding and learn about characterisation. At the end of Key Stage 1 more capable pupils write sentences that are grammatically correct and accurately punctuated. Older pupils write for a range of purposes, but often not at sufficient length.
8. Standards in mathematics are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. Pupils at Key Stage 1 add and subtract numbers of increasing size and know the main features of simple, regular solid and flat shapes. Many at the end of Key Stage 2 are familiar with a wide range of number work and know about ways of representing mathematical information, such as pie charts and line graphs. However, the overuse of worksheets at both key stages reduces the progress of higher attaining pupils.
9. Attainment in science is below national expectations at the end of both key stages. At Key Stage 1, pupils gain much knowledge of living things, but their investigative skills are not well developed. Many at Key Stage 2 have a clearer understanding of how to investigate and draw conclusions from their work. They use correct scientific terms such as “evaporation” to describe what they find. However, their knowledge of living things is not as strong as it should be.
10. In the other subjects, not already mentioned, the standards of the oldest pupils are broadly in line with those expected of their age group. In religious education, pupils reach levels of attainment at the end of both key stages that are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.

### **Pupils’ attitudes, values and personal development**

11. Pupils’ attitudes, values and personal development are good. They promote a positive ethos in the school that contributes well to the learning environment. The positive situation found at the time of the previous report has been maintained successfully. The school has provided increased opportunities for personal development and has refined its behaviour management policy to ensure that praise is well directed and deserved.
12. Children under five settle quickly into school routines and build up good relationships with adults and with each other. They behave well and are co-operative with each other, amicably sharing toys and resources, and taking turns. They enjoy the variety of activities provided for them and are keen and eager to learn. They are attentive and are beginning to follow instructions well.
13. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils have good attitudes to learning and are well motivated. They listen politely and attentively to the teacher and to each other and are keen to answer questions, putting up their hands to do so. The pupils show consideration for others and for property. They are courteous and helpful to each other, to staff and to visitors. They work well together and individually and show an interest in their work. Most are keen to participate in question and answer sessions and do so in a sensible and mature way. They readily take turns and show a willingness to apply themselves to whatever task is presented to them. They are keen to collect rewards for good behaviour and good work. They enjoy conversations with each other and adults and listen with interest to what is being said. This was evident when pupils were reading to inspectors, or discussing their views of the school and the part they play in its activities. Such arrangements allow for confident, positive learning to take place.
14. Pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around school is satisfactory overall, and is frequently good or better. At lunchtime, pupils behave well in the dining area whilst eating their meals and when outside in the playground or elsewhere. There are harmonious relationships and the pupils chat about their interests. The children from the Speech and Language Resource Base are well integrated. Pupils hold doors open for teachers and visitors. They are well mannered, using ‘please’, ‘thank you’, and ‘excuse me’, as a normal part of their daily language. Pupils are trustworthy and helpful. They tidy away at the end of lessons, collecting books and returning equipment to storage areas. There is no evidence of bullying or

of unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils have a clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. There have been no incidences of pupil exclusions, either fixed term or permanent, in recent times.

15. Pupils' personal development is good overall. Opportunities for displaying initiative have recently been increased by the introduction of a school council. Its members take their responsibilities seriously and there are already indications that the input to the school's activities will be effective and treated positively. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and teachers, are very good. Pupils co-operate well with each other in lessons; they share materials and help each other well when working in pairs or larger groupings. The school has maintained the high standard in the area of attitudes, behaviour and personal development that was reported at the time of the previous inspection.
16. Pupils' overall attendance is satisfactory. There is evidence of steady, though slight improvement in recent years as a result of the school's constant reinforcement to parents of the importance of attendance to their children's education. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average for school of similar type. Levels of unauthorised absence are low and there is no evidence of truancy. Punctuality in the morning is generally good. When instances of lateness occur, they are of a minor nature and are not disruptive to lessons.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

17. The quality of teaching is good. It is consistently satisfactory or better and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection. In more than seven lessons in every ten that are taught, the quality of teaching is good, and in three in ten, it is very good. The teaching of children under five is very good. The standard of teaching in the Speech and Language Resource Base is high with nine out of every ten lessons being good or very good. More than half the teaching at Key Stage 1 is good or better. At Key Stage 2, nearly eight in ten lessons are good or better. A higher proportion of good teaching was seen at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1.
18. Teaching quality has improved significantly since the last inspection. At that time, approximately seven per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory. The amount of good or very good teaching has increased. The commitment of teachers and classroom staff, and the high level of care and personal support given to pupils are a strength of the work of the school. The good quality of teaching has a direct and beneficial effect on pupils' learning.
19. The quality of teaching in the nursery is very good. Nursery nurses, non-teaching assistants and other adults work well together to create a calm atmosphere where effective learning takes place. Day to day assessment is used successfully in identifying individual needs.
20. The skilful way in which teachers at Key Stage 1 and 2 manage and control their classes ensures that, in nearly all lessons, pupils concentrate and apply themselves effectively to their tasks. Pupils know that teachers have high expectations of behaviour in lessons, and as a result they conduct themselves well. This has a positive effect on the progress that they make. Teachers have appropriate expectations of their pupils and they use time and learning resources well to promote learning. The pupils involve themselves well in the activities that are provided, and this improves the quality of their learning considerably. However, the quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent, and pupils do not get enough information about how they can improve their performance. As a result, the amount of progress that they make is reduced.
21. At Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils gain skills, knowledge and understanding well. This is due largely to the good grasp that teachers have of the content of lessons, and to the effective way in which the pupils learn. Overall, the quality of pupils' learning is good. Generally, they work with satisfactory levels of independence, understand what they are doing and co-operate well when working together. This was evident in a science lesson in which Year 2 pupils helped each other to collect and study plants from the school field. These attributes, and the good quality of teaching, ensure that in nearly all lessons pupils learn something new or consolidate existing skills, knowledge and understanding effectively.
22. Generally, teachers' planning and the support provided by them and classroom assistants, help to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. In many lessons, different tasks are set to ensure that pupils of differing capabilities are challenged properly. However, occasionally, teachers do not make enough provision for the higher attaining pupils. This detracts from the amount of progress they make. The

teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. In most lessons, effective provision is made for these children and those for whom English is an additional language. In subjects such as English, differentiated work is provided, which takes appropriate account of the targets of pupils' individual education plans, and additional support is given. The learning of those with special educational needs is good, and they make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. Those for whom English is an additional language learn effectively and make progress similar to most other pupils.

23. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught effectively at both key stages. The principles of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been incorporated well into teachers' practice and this has led to improvements in the quality of their work. The teaching of different subjects varies from good to satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good in English, mathematics and music. It is satisfactory in other subjects. In one or two foundation subjects, inspectors did not have enough time to see sufficient lessons to make reliable judgements about the teaching standards.
24. Classroom support staff, including those helping pupils with special educational needs, work hard and effectively. They make a very valuable contribution to the progress made by the pupils they support. They are particularly effective in the Speech and Language Resource Base and the nursery where they promote the learning of pupils who are new to school or have specific learning difficulties. They co-operate closely with teachers and are briefed well by them about the work to be done. This improves their effectiveness.

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

25. The curriculum for children under the age of five is very good. The school uses the information about its incoming pupils to provide a broad, balanced and relevant programme, which meets the needs of each individual. There is very well planned learning for all the nationally agreed areas of learning.
26. At Key Stages 1 and 2 the curriculum is broad, generally balanced and relevant. It meets statutory requirements to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum. Religious education is taught appropriately in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. The school has a well-planned programme of personal and social education, which includes sex, and drugs education. However, at both key stages, the time allocated to lessons does not meet the minimum recommended. Also, in some subjects at Key Stage 2, such as geography, the timing of units of work does not always ensure that skill, knowledge and understanding are gained sufficiently progressively.
27. Significant improvements have been made to curricular provision since the last inspection. The successful development of strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are beginning to impact positively on pupils' skills. The provision for higher attaining pupils and those needing help with reading has been increased. The time before assembly is now used well.
28. The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. Clear, appropriate targets are identified in the pupils' individual education plans, which are regularly reviewed. All pupils have equal access to the full curriculum.
29. Policy statements are in place for all subjects, which, together with the clear, long term planning helps to guide teachers when they draw up their own plans. However, the medium term planning and schemes of work do not always identify the key learning objectives, clearly enough or ensure the progressive acquisition of skills in history, geography, design and technology and religious education.
30. The very good provision for extra curricular activities has been maintained since the last inspection. It considerably enhances the work done in lessons. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in many activities including orienteering, recorders, drama, football, netball, athletics, cricket, juggling, and maths, sports and conservation clubs. Opportunities for pupils to develop independence and responsibility through residential experience and visits are a good feature of the school. Badgers, the before and after school provision, is very good.
31. The school plays a key role in the development of the Four Oaks Cluster of Schools group. This aims to improve the quality of all schools by providing training opportunities, networking at every level,

developing community learning and engaging in a range of educational development and review projects. This group is celebrating a Millennium Festival, 'Sutton Coldfield 2000,' at the end of June, to provide opportunities for all children and members of the community to participate in learning activities.

32. Mere Green believes in the importance of community at all levels. The school has very productive ties with an array of local community groups and associations. It also has strong links with the Mere Green library; all classes having regular time tabled visits, where they learn the use of library skills and information communication technology. By using this good resource and through the involvement of local residents, older pupils find out about what life was like in Mere Green in the past.
33. Visits from theatre companies and visiting speakers help to enrich the pupils' experience. Very good links with other schools in the area strengthen the curriculum, for example by providing opportunities for competitive games. There are good links with the local secondary school. Throughout the year, there are visits from secondary school staff, and pupils make visits of a curriculum and recreational nature. This helps to ensure a smooth transition between the two phases. The school readily accepts students on teaching practice, and those on community and work experience placements.
34. The school successfully promotes pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a wide range of experiences and activities, which reflect the values expressed in the schools aims. There has been a clear improvement since the last inspection. There is now good provision for pupil's spiritual development. Pupils now have greater opportunities to reflect and marvel at the world around them. The use of reflective time, candles and music in assemblies helps to focus thinking about matters of spiritual significance. Assemblies at both key stages are mainly Christian in character and contribute effectively to raising pupils' spiritual awareness. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school's rules are clear and well understood. Members of staff act as very good role models for pupils. Assemblies often embrace a moral aspect, which enhances the other forms of provision the school has made. Social development is promoted very well. Co-operation and working together are emphasised strongly. Members of staff give pupils confidence in dealing with difficulties, and emphasise personal responsibility for behaviour and concern for others. There are clear expectations that pupils will show kindness to each other and be aware of the needs of others. A recently established school council has extended the opportunities for showing initiative and understanding social conventions. The school provides for the cultural development of pupils well. Pupils are very much aware of cultural diversity. They accept it and celebrate all that it has to offer. In their religious education lessons pupils are able to explore and share other faiths. The work done in lessons successfully extends awareness of other cultures. For example, younger pupils paint with fingers in imitation of a Japanese artist, Hiroshigi.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

35. The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is very good. This enhances the quality of education that is provided by the school and has a positive impact on attainment and progress. The positive situation found at the time of the previous inspection has been successfully built upon and further developed.
36. All members of the school community work together to provide a very caring environment, especially in the Speech and Language Resource Base classes, in which the pupils feel very well cared for and secure. There is good provision for the support of pupils with special needs. Led well by the caring headteacher, all staff respond sensitively and positively to the needs of the pupils in their care. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the pupils as individuals. All the pupils are sensitive to the needs of each other. They embrace those less able than themselves in a mutually rewarding partnership. The resulting supportive atmosphere within the school is conducive to learning. Relationships amongst all members of the school community are very good. The pupils are happy at school and confidently turn to adults when they need help or advice.
37. Members of the mid-day supervisory staff relate well to the pupils. The good support they give during lunchtimes has a positive effect on behaviour and safety. First aid and fire safety arrangements are satisfactory, overall, and the school provides a safe and supportive environment in classrooms and public areas. The school's procedures for dealing with accidents are secure. No health and safety hazards were observed during the inspection as a result of the regular rigorous risk assessments that are performed to ensure the safety of the school community.

38. The school's procedures for child protection are very good. They meet statutory requirements. The headteacher is the designated member of staff. He has received relevant training and is suitably experienced. He is well supported by the special needs co-ordinator. Class teachers and support staff have received appropriate training and are attentive and conscientious in their approach to the proper support of the pupils in their charge.
39. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Computerised records of attendance are properly maintained and comply with statutory requirements. Procedures for recording unauthorised absence are rigorous and there are good procedures to deal effectively with any unexpected absence.
40. The measures that are in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. At their heart is recognition of the importance of being sensitive to the needs of the pupils as individuals. Rewards and sanctions are well understood and accepted by the pupils. The procedures are effective and allow the pupils to take advantage of the opportunities for learning presented to them in an environment in which there is an absence of oppressive behaviour, bullying, sexism or racism. There is an ethos of good behaviour within the school that facilitates learning.
41. The school's arrangements for the monitoring of pupils' personal development are satisfactory, overall. Formal arrangements are satisfactory, although records of achievement are not used. Informal arrangements for supporting pupils' personal development, which benefit from teachers' knowledge of pupils as individuals, are good. The procedures for monitoring the progress of pupils needing special support are well defined. Good links exist with outside support services that contribute well to the work of the pupils with special educational needs.
42. Although there is no published whole-school policy for assessment, recording and reporting, the school has made some progress in developing systems for assessing the quality of pupils' work. Where the procedures are effective, the information assists teachers with target setting and with the planning of pupils' future work. Procedures are particularly good in relation to pupils in the nursery, those with special educational needs, and for pupils in the Speech and Language Resource Base. Appropriate use is made of a range of statutory and optional tests and a comprehensive database is being accumulated. This enables the school to undertake long-term tracking of pupils' progress. This is a successful aspect of the school's work. However, the information gained from assessment does not inform the teachers' planning effectively. Planned work does not always meet the needs of the range of pupils in each class, or help to raise their levels of performance. Within some subjects, such as science or information technology, assessment procedures are either lacking or are not sufficiently systematic. Opportunities for assessment are not sufficiently identified in the medium-term planning. The school maintains basic academic records, mainly in English, mathematics and science.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

43. At the time of the previous inspection a positive partnership with parents was reported. The school has worked hard to develop these links even further and they are now very good.
44. Parents are very supportive of the school. They consider it to be a caring school that provides well for their children. They are comfortable approaching the school when they have worries or concerns, and are very happy with the quality of teaching and the progress made by their children. They feel that behaviour is good, teaching is good, the school has high expectations, develops mature and responsible attitudes and is led and managed well. Inspection evidence generally supports these positive features. A small number of parents express concerns about the amount of homework, provided by the school, some think there is too much, some too little. One or two are worried about the impact of some large class sizes. Inspection evidence does not support the views of these parents. Although there are two large classes, the school considers this preferable to the alternative of mixed age classes.
45. The school's links with parents are very secure. Home-school links are supported by the introduction of a home-school agreement that provides for commitment by the school, parents and the pupil to the improvement of standards.



46. Parental support both in school and at home is of high quality. Many parents help in school with a variety of class-based and extra-curricular activities. Their contribution is valued and contributes positively to pupils' learning. There is a highly committed and well-organised Parents' Association that successfully fosters relationships between home and school. Its activities provide opportunities for parents, staff and pupils to socialise and raise funds which provide much welcomed additional financial support to the school. This aspect of the school's links is a strength of the school.
47. The quality of information provided by the school is very good. Regular newsletters to parents are well planned, informative and helpful. They are much appreciated by parents. The school prospectus is an attractive document, which, together with the well produced Governors' Annual Report to Parents, gives parents a very wide range of information presented in a user-friendly style. Statutory reporting requirements are met fully.
48. Pupils' annual reports are of high quality. The weakness reported at the time of the previous inspection has been positively addressed and they now provide objective information on what pupils have done and can do. They meet reporting requirements fully.
49. There are regular opportunities, formal and informal, for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their children's progress. The headteacher makes himself available at any time to meet with parents, and teachers are happy to meet with them informally before or after school, or by appointment outside lessons.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

50. Strong leadership and management have a positive effect on the quality of education. The headteacher gives clear direction to the school and is ably supported by the assistant headteacher. The senior management team play a full role in determining whole school issues. The headteacher's very focused and detailed evaluation of the school's needs is embodied in a highly structured plan for development. Its priorities are focused on raising standards. Parents hold the headteacher, governors and senior staff in high esteem. 96 per cent of those responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire agree or strongly agree that the school is well led. The school's aims are reflected very well in its life and work. Pupils enjoy going to school. They feel valued and well supported.
51. Since the last inspection the headteacher has worked very hard and effectively with all members of the school community to raise standards, improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour, to raise the profile of the school in the community, and to create a better physical and learning environment. He has lead the school very well in creating an open, positive and forward-looking ethos. Teamwork is much improved and new ideas, such as "whole brain learning," exploited when they are thought appropriate. There is now a shared determination to take the school forward and improve pupils' achievements. The headteacher's involvement of the school with its neighbours – "The Four Oaks Cluster"- has also brought many benefits to teachers, governors and pupils. The key issues of the last inspection report have been addressed successfully. Initiatives have been introduced to meet the needs of both higher and lower attaining pupils. For example, timetabled group teaching for higher attaining pupils has been put into place recently. These measures are beginning to have a positive impact on standards.
52. The governing body is very effective. It is fulfils its responsibilities very well. Statutory requirements are met fully. Governors are very supportive of the school. They seek information effectively, involve themselves in the day to day life of the school and raise questions appropriately. As a result, they understand its strengths and weaknesses very well.
53. The school monitors and evaluates its performance effectively. A well established nine-term cycle of review and evaluation, and a rigorous programme of action planning assist in this process. The headteacher and senior staff carry out in-depth analyses of the standards achieved by pupils. This information forms part of the year by year acquisition of information contained in its "Performance Analysis and Review" booklet. A good range of tests provides data, which is examined to reveal strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate action is taken to raise standards. For example, pupils' spelling was identified as an area for development. Changes were made and significant improvements have been

evident in subsequent tests. The information is used very well to track the progress of individuals. The influence of the many factors outside the control of the school, such as pupil mobility and fluctuating levels of special educational needs, make judgements about the overall performance of the school difficult. At present, it is difficult for the school to identify how much progress is made by those pupils who spend the whole of their primary school career at Mere Green.

54. Good delegation of responsibilities ensures that the talents and expertise of staff are used well. Detailed job descriptions allow staff to be sure of what is expected of them. However, these are not always specific enough to fully address the needs of the school. For example, opportunities were missed to adapt them to remedy two of the weaknesses identified in the last report. Since the last inspection, the effectiveness of the subject co-ordinators has improved and some have carried out observations of classroom practice. The headteacher and senior staff have also monitored lessons to ensure the effective implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. However, such procedures are not yet sufficiently systematic to consistently raise the quality of teaching and learning. For example, not all the co-ordinators of core National Curriculum subjects have had the opportunity to make a series of classroom observations.
55. The governing body works closely with the headteacher to plan the school's financial strategy and monitor its budget. The financial planning process is very well organised. Financial resources are used effectively to meet the needs of the school as defined in its development plan and longer-term strategy. At present, as a result of substantial sums having been spent to up-grade the schools facilities and resources, reserve levels are very low but the school has effective contingency plans in place to ensure that its finances will be sufficient to ensure the continuation of its present strategies. The headteacher and governors are very aware of the need to provide as high a standard of educational provision as possible, and their planning is solidly based on ensuring that the school's educational provision is sustainable and that its educational targets are met.
56. There is good liaison between governors, the headteacher and staff in formulating the budget. Governors take an active part and feel ownership of the budget and the strategies behind it. They fully explore all options open to them and take decisions with confidence because of their individual expertise and the objective information provided to them by the headteacher. There is a very effective, corporate decision making process, that ensures that the financial resources available to the school, which, even allowing for the additional funding provided to support the pupils with special needs, are very much higher than the national average for schools of a similar type, are properly targeted to improving standards throughout the school.
57. The specific funds element of the school's finances, and other additional funding, is well targeted. Its use by the school has a positive impact on the quality of learning provision for the pupils who are supported, such as those in the speech and language resource bases, those with special needs in mainstream school, or those benefiting from the use of booster funds. The funds are used very effectively in raising the quality of support and the attainment of those pupils who benefit.
58. The school makes excellent use of new technologies. In addition to the support of administration activities, where computerised systems are well used, the school has moved positively to embrace the Internet, encourages the use of e-mail by staff, pupils and parents, has introduced desktop publishing and is starting to make good use of multimedia throughout the school.
59. The school's overall administration arrangements, and the day-to-day control of its finances, are good. Good use is made of the information available from the school's computerised management system and there are effective financial and administrative procedures in place that allow the school secretaries to positively support the work of the school. The school's most recent financial audit was satisfactory. Its few recommendations have been implemented effectively.
60. Overall, the governing body uses the four principles of compare, challenge, consult, and compete, well. It ensures that the school receives the best value from its resources, although more attention could be given to national comparatives in support of that given to local comparisons so that the school's performance in the national context is better understood. The school's spending is evaluated to ensure that the most economic, effective and efficient services are provided for the pupils and staff

61. The school is well staffed for the number of pupils on roll. The teachers have good qualifications and a range of experience. There is good provision of classroom support staff.
62. There is spacious accommodation, particularly in the Key Stage 2 building. The accommodation throughout the school, but particularly in Key Stage 1, has been considerably enhanced since the time of the last inspection. There is a planned programme of improvement to develop further the core skills area and a computer suite. Teachers have worked very hard to create a bright stimulating environment in all areas of the school and display of pupils work is of a very high standard. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school has an open library, which is in the process of being updated so that all book stock is recorded electronically.
63. The site manager and the team of cleaners keep the building in a good condition. The grounds, gardens and outside teaching area are very good features provided by the Parents' Association, and maintained with assistance from a committed parent.
64. There is good provision of learning resources, overall and these are used well to give pupils practical experience in lessons. They have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. They are accessible to all pupils and are well organised.

## **THE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE RESOURCE BASE**

65. The Speech and Language Resource Base is a strength of the school. It provides places for 16 children at Key Stage 1 with statements of special educational needs, drawn from the Birmingham Local Education Authority on a priority basis. The pupils are housed in two separate classes. All of the pupils have statements associated with speech and language problems and many have a wide range of complex communication difficulties. Most are brought in by taxi or mini-bus provided by the local education authority and accompanied by school taxi guides.
66. Each class has a specialist teacher supported by a very able and experienced classroom assistant. A further part-time teacher completes the team. A speech and language therapist offers high quality support and expertly assists in assessing pupils and in planning and the design of lesson materials and learning activities. Teaching in both classes is good and can often be very good. The teachers know the children and their problems well. They offer a range of interesting lessons sensitively, that help the pupils learn effectively and make good progress. Teaching is directed partly at individual pupils' specific communication problems and partly at ensuring that all pupils receive their full National Curriculum entitlement. Teachers use a range of specially chosen modern resources routinely, and pupils receive a good introduction to using computers to consolidate and extend learning. The pace of lessons is always lively and there is a good balance between oral, written and practical work. The monitoring of children's learning is very thorough, the planning of lessons focuses on ensuring that teaching is based securely on what has already been learned, and records of pupils' achievements are kept meticulously. The pupils really enjoy attending school
67. Pupils join other Key Stage 1 classes for physical education and other practical subjects. They are integrated with mainstream classes as soon as they are able. Some of the pupils transfer to Key Stage 2 classes within the school, whilst others attend neighbourhood schools on leaving the base. Pupils in the base are offered the same extra reading support from parents, co-ordinated by senior management, as their mainstream counterparts and they join in the school's regular programme of extra-curricular activities and educational visits. One child is learning French and two others join in the line dancing classes offered by parents to mainstream pupils after school.
68. The pupils enjoy their work, hurry into class each morning and can hardly wait for lessons to begin. They have a clear understanding of classroom routines and, although some pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties, the attitudes of all pupils towards working in the Speech and Language Resource Base are very positive. In all lessons seen during the inspection the pupils behaved well. The progress pupils make and their keenness to learn were endorsed by parents attending the consultation evening and in letters written to the inspection team. Parents play an important role in co-operating with teachers in helping pupils learn at home and in tackling work assigned for homework.
69. Pupils make very good progress during their stay in the Speech and Language Resource Base, so much so

that some individual children are able to join mainstream peers for all regular lessons toward the end of the key stage. Although the overall academic standards of the pupils in the Speech and Language Resource Base usually fall well below the national average, all the children make a good start and their learning needs are met well. They learn to read, write and speak and gradually acquire the ability to maintain attention on task for quite long periods of time. They also make a solid start in learning mathematical facts, procedures and vocabulary and take a keen interest in reading and hearing stories. They really enjoy life in Mere Green and are not afraid to talk to visitors and explain their work.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

70. The headteacher, governors and staff should now:-

1. Raise standards in the core subjects at both key stages by,
  - (a) ensuring that pupils consistently get more guidance from the marking of their work, about what they need to do to improve, [Paragraphs 20, 91, 103]
  - (b) ensuring that assessment information is used more consistently and effectively to inform teachers' planning, [Paragraphs 42, 111]
  - (c) reducing the use of worksheets to frame and record tasks, [Paragraphs 8, 89, 97, 110]
  - (d) making the procedures for monitoring the quality of teachers' work more focused and systematic, [Paragraph 54]
2. In relation to English, specifically: provide greater opportunities for pupils to write at length across a range of subjects, [Paragraphs 89, 127]
3. Take steps to ensure that the progress of that group of pupils who spend all their primary school life at Mere Green can be easily be identified, in order to better judge the effectiveness of the school's performance. [Paragraph 53]

When drawing up their action plan the governing body should also review the lesson hours at both key stages.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	39

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	31	45	24	0	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*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	44	223
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		35

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	19
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5	76

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	44
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	43

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.4

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.1
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	16	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	12	12
	Girls	15	16	12
	Total	28	28	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82(63)	82(55)	71(61)
	National	82(80)	83(81)	87(84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	14
	Girls	14	14	13
	Total	26	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76(64)	79(67)	79(73)
	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	16	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	7	7
	Girls	10	8	7
	Total	18	15	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62(70)	52(64)	48(74)
	National	70(65)	69(59)	78(69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	5	6
	Girls	9	6	10
	Total	14	11	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	48(60)	38(68)	55(64)
	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	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	180
Any other minority ethnic group	6

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*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)	14.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.7
Average class size	28.5

#### **Education support staff: YR– Y6**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	44

Total number of education support staff	3.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	228

Number of pupils per FTE adult	11
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	699403
Total expenditure	690215
Expenditure per pupil	2604
Balance brought forward from previous year	55310
Balance carried forward to next year	64498

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	267
Number of questionnaires returned	51

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	43	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	45	10	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	53	4	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	57	18	2	6
The teaching is good.	53	47	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	65	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	29	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	47	4	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	31	63	4	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	49	47	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	43	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	37	8	0	12

### **Other issues raised by parents**

A few parents are concerned about large class sizes. The school takes the view that they are preferable to mixed ages. It points out that extra classroom support assistance has been given to the classes concerned.

## **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

72. The nursery is a strength of the school. Children are admitted in the September between their third and fourth birthdays and are placed in one of the four family groups divided into two areas called 'Heron' and 'Kingfishers'. Typically, attainment on entry to the nursery is broadly average, although the school's testing over the last few years shows that mathematical skills are less well developed than other areas of learning. Relatively few children enter the school's reception class from the nursery. At the time of the inspection there are fifty-two children on the register of which twenty-seven are full time. There were three children under the age of five in the reception class.
73. Provision in the nursery is very good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be good. The nursery rooms are colourful and bright and divided into different areas where the children can play in groups, work with others, play musical instruments, or sit quietly and look at books in the library area. The curriculum for children under the age of five is very good. The school uses the information about its incoming children to provide a broad balanced and relevant programme, which meets the needs of each individual. There is very good planned learning for these children to spend time with support staff or other adults. Planning in the early years is thorough with all areas of learning covered. The quality of teaching in the nursery is very good. Nursery nurses, non-teaching assistants and other adults work well together to create a calm atmosphere where effective learning takes place. Day to day assessment is used successfully in identifying individual needs. Learning resources are very good in all six areas, well organised and accessible to all children.

### Personal and social development

74. The children enter the nursery with well-developed social skills and through the teacher's structured routines the children gain quickly in confidence. By their fifth birthday many children exceed the standards set for them. The three large areas used as classrooms are organised well to ensure all children have ready access to apparatus and tools they require. They learn quickly to have respect for each other, work in groups and independently, concentrate, and persevere in learning and ask for help when required. Behaviour at all times is good and children know what is right and what is wrong. They take great care of their environment and their property.

### Language and literacy

75. The quality of teaching and learning in the area of language and literacy is very good. By the time they are five most children achieve the standards for their age group and many exceed them. Through the many planned activities most children are able to talk freely about their needs and experiences with other children and familiar adults. Learning takes place through listening attentively to the very good questions posed. Children recognise names beginning with particular sounds. For example, they know those beginning with 'S' and names with 's' in them and are able to identify this sound in 'sea shells', in the days of the week and in the poem about *Bears*. As part of homework children are asked to bring in items beginning with a given letter. Children respond well, filling two-letter sound tables with objects for example, spider, spoon and saxophone. Opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills in a range of situations are planned well. Children use the telephone to take orders in the "Mere Green Café" and to make appointments for people who want to see the vet. Teachers provide opportunities for early writing experiences writing as children take orders for food and gather the information about the pets from their owners. Very good clear notices, labels, instructions, and poems related to themes in all areas of the nursery help the children to recognise and appreciate the need for writing words and reading them. All the children in the nursery enjoy books, and the majority of them are able to choose their favourite book. Children listen well to the stories and join in with the reader. Their response to, *The Three Little Pigs*, *Barney*, and *The Gingerbread Man*, shows the skill the teachers have in reading stories with understanding. The nursery has a library for children, which is open on Thursdays and Fridays for children to choose books.

### Mathematics

76. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. From the time they enter the nursery the children make good progress. The children achieve the standards set for five year olds, and many exceed them. Most

children know numbers to 20 and many can count to 30 and beyond. Each day a number line is used to identify the date, this number is then found and placed correctly on the board, with the month and weather symbol. Children are very familiar with number rhymes, songs, counting games and stories. Teachers use mathematics well in every day situations in the planned programme for play. Achievement in shape is good. Children can recognise a circle, square, triangle and rectangle and these shapes hang from a 'maths tree'. A good strategy using a hide and seek technique helps children recognise and name a cylinder, pyramid, cube, cuboid cone and sphere. Children estimate from a wide variety of well-prepared bags of objects, which are heavy and light and check their answers using a balance well. They use money in tills in the café and relate to numbers on the telephone.

#### Creative development

77. The quality of teaching in this area is very good. The children achieve the standards expected for five year olds, and many exceed them. The members of staff provide children with a very rich environment for creative development. The 'Swans' room displays a wide variety of percussion instruments, which help children express themselves creatively and have an increasing ability to respond to music. A wide range of musical instruments, from different cultures, hang from a 'music tree', to help children to recognise them. Although the teaching of music was not observed, there is evidence that children enjoy chanting and humming simple rhymes. Children take part in class assemblies, Christmas, Diwali and spring festivals. They work from direct observation and from imagination when drawing the animals seen at the zoo. Very good learning takes place as class teachers constantly discuss the colour, shape and size of the animals and link these to pictures in books and animals on display. Very good opportunities are provided to develop their imagination through planned role-play. Attractive displays reflect the broad range of their work shows respect for their efforts and help to stimulate further learning.

#### Knowledge and understanding of the world

78. Teaching and learning are very good. Provision for helping children to gain knowledge and understanding of the world is very good. Most children achieve the standards for five year olds and some exceed them. Children are inquisitive, and they enjoy exploring a wide variety of materials and objects. Visitors to school promote learning in this area. For example, the children have the opportunity to stroke and touch the creatures the "animal man" has brought in, and ask many questions about them. As part of their scientific development they grow seeds and learn about why things float and sink. Environmental awareness is developed as children are given the opportunity to create a habitat for snakes in the sandpit area, using shells and leaves. Children were observed at the computer using the mouse successfully and developing their keyboard skills by using a variety of programs.

#### Physical development

79. The quality of teaching is good and children make good progress. Most children achieve the standards set for five year olds and some exceed them. The large, well-maintained, outside play area is a good feature of the nursery, and helps children to be aware of themselves as individuals. The large apparatus is used well and children use the climbing frame and slide confidently as they are supervised and encouraged by the staff. Children run fluently, ride their bikes well and follow each other through the new 'Wormy' tunnel. They learn to work things out for themselves as they piece together the large out door jigsaw pieces. Children make good progress in developing the skills needed to play and work with construction kits, computers and art materials. They build towers; decide which colour of wool to thread around the animal shape they have selected. Teachers are very successful in developing children's hand and eye co-ordination. This increases confidence and develops the children's use of paintbrushes, pencil, crayons, scissors, pastels, paste spreaders and collage materials.
80. Levels of pupils' attainment, as shown by the results of national tests in English, mathematics and science, are significantly affected by a number of factors that are described in the "How high are standards?" section of the report.

#### ENGLISH

81. Over the last three years results in the national tests for seven and 11 year olds have been variable. For two out of three years attainment has been below average. The results of the national tests in 1999, show

that pupils' attainment in reading and writing, at Key Stage 1, was broadly in line with the national average, and at the end of Key Stage 2, it was below. Attainment was also average when compared with similar schools, at the end of Key Stage 1. At the end of Key Stage 2, it was well below that of similar schools.

82. The school has a higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs. Most classes have eight to ten pupils who need extra help with their learning and this is affecting scores in national test results. Inspection findings show that attainment in speaking and listening is broadly in line with national expectations, but reading and writing are below at both key stages. Learning can vary. Whilst pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils make steady progress in writing, in some respects those achieving the 'middle ground' are not achieving as well as expected. For instance, at the end of Key Stage 1 and in some Key Stage 2 classes, pupils write slowly and produce a limited amount of extended writing. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve similar results to the rest of the class.
83. English has improved since the previous inspection, because of a shared commitment and clear focus on what has to be done. The library is now well used and this is helping to improve pupils' research skills. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils identify fiction and non-fiction books, and understand how to use a context page. Older pupils can skim and scan for information and are beginning to use the computer to retrieve information and for independent research. There is more challenge in the work set for more capable pupils and this is encouraging higher standards of work. For instance, a small group of Year 1 pupils were seen during the inspection acting as detectives and developing their skills with reading, writing and decision making successfully.
84. The literacy strategy is well established in each year group, with whole class activities and the plenary (feedback session) effectively developing speaking and listening skills. Basic skills are regularly taught, and a focus on spelling and punctuation is improving standards. Pupils are beginning to use a range of spelling strategies, such as making a good guess. They use dictionaries and the 'look, cover, write and check' technique. This is helping to raise standards. However, younger pupils are still unsure of some aspects of grammar. For instance in Year 2 there is some confusion about using nouns and adjectives.
85. The teaching in Year 1 and Year 5 provides good examples of how English can be developed through other subjects. For instance, pupils in Year 1 share the tale of *Mrs Wobble the waitress* and act out the story in the café. They write their own menus, and work out how much items costs. Older pupils study other beliefs in religious education and use this knowledge to enhance their work in English, as they discuss and write about traditional stories from other cultures. However, in a number of lessons worksheets are over used and take away the opportunity for pupils to communicate their ideas in writing.
86. Standards in speaking are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils listen attentively and are interested in what others have to say. Younger pupils ask and answer questions confidently and work well together in groups. Older pupils are developing greater competency with the spoken word and begin to be more precise about their choice of vocabulary. This is evident when pupils in Year 4 explore ideas in work about 'dolphins at risk', and consider emotive verbs such as trap, kill and destroy. By the end of the key stage, pupils are adding to discussions readily and putting forward their own points of view. Drama is also used well to promote presentation and performing skills. Year 3 pupils confidently perform their version of 'alternative traditional tales' to the whole school, as well as parents and visitors.
87. Attainment in reading is below national expectations at the end of both key stages. The pattern of attainment in reading reflects the unevenness of national test results in English over time, and the different levels of special educational need and pupil mobility. In some classes, such as Year 1 and Year 3, it is broadly average. Younger pupils enjoy reading books, talking about the illustrations and memorising their favourite parts. By seven, most pupils are accurate readers but still need to develop fluency. They use their knowledge of recognising words by sight and letters sounds well to find out unknown words. In Key Stage 2, pupils begin to read for deeper meaning. When studying *Sammi's Story*, they explore characterisation and refer to the text to justify their point of view. For instance, they explore images of a strict father and predict how this may influence the plot. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs are given extra help to improve their reading. Regular, specific phonic support using the 'Toe by Toe' scheme is enabling pupils to make good progress with their learning.

88. Attainment in writing is below national expectations at the end of the key stages. The school has worked well to improve spelling, and pupils make steady progress as they begin to spell words with greater accuracy and independence. Similarly, skills with punctuation are also improving, as pupils successfully build upon their previous learning. Standards in handwriting and presentation still need improvement particularly at Key Stage 2.
89. Younger pupils experiment with their early writing skills and gain greater control over the shape and size of their writing. By seven, more capable writers produce sentences that are correctly punctuated and grammatically correct. At Key Stage 2, pupils write for a range of different purposes, such as poems, letters and imaginative stories and attempt confidently to spell unknown words and improve their work. Since the last inspection, greater use has been made of drafting and editing work, especially with older pupils. Nevertheless, the amount of personal extended writing in English and in other subjects, is less than expected. A scrutiny of pupils' work in their English books shows few pieces of writing at length. This is particularly so for pupils achieving the 'middle ground'. Often the time given to writing in lessons is too short for longer pieces to be completed. At times, worksheets, which require only words to be filled in, are reducing the opportunity for pupils to write independently.
90. During lessons, behaviour is good. Pupils concentrate well and are keen to learn. Work in groups is of a good standard because of good social skills. Younger pupils enjoy sharing their work in plenary sessions (feedback time) whilst older pupils show initiative and are confident to take part in discussions.
91. Teaching is good, overall. Teachers are hardworking and have a shared commitment to raise standards in English. They have the expertise to do so. A strength is the quality of their relationships with pupils, whose responses are valued and encouraged. Teachers' questioning skills are also of a high standard; they are very effective when sharing texts. For instance, in Year 5 when pupils read *The Poor Washerwoman*, 'when,' 'how' and 'why' questions are used well to develop speaking and reading skills. Group work is also planned for different ability groups, and there is a good match of work to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils and those with difficulties in reading and writing. On occasions, work set for the 'middle ground' groups shows low expectations on the part of teachers, when, for instance, they accept four or five lines as a finished piece of work for older pupils. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Sometimes, pupils do not get enough guidance about how to improve. Lessons are very well organised and managed.
92. The co-ordinator has managed the subject well and, along with key staff, has identified areas for improvement. Advice and expertise from outside the school has been well focused on this. As yet, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not having enough impact in raising standards.
93. Since the previous report the library has improved and is well used. Resources in English support learning effectively. At times the size of text used in 'whole class work' can be small, and pupils sitting on the edge of the group find it difficult to read.

## MATHEMATICS

94. Pupils in both key stages are attaining standards in mathematics that are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and achieve standards in line with their prior attainment.
95. The last inspection report indicated that attainment was average at the end of both key stages. However, this judgement was not confirmed fully in relation to either key stage in the national tests later that year, when attainment proved to be below that identified at the time of the inspection. Attainment in mathematics in Key Stage 1 has been well below average in each year since the last inspection, in relation to the expected Level 2. In 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving level 2 or above was well below average and the proportion attaining the more challenging Level 3 was close to the national average. Performance in relation to that found in schools with similar characteristics was well below average in 1999. However, performance data at Key Stage 1 includes statistics relating to the pupils in the Speech and Language Unit. This has a significant, and negative, effect on the published figures. In the current Year 2 cohort, unit pupils form around one quarter of the total number.

96. At Key Stage 2, attainment at Level 4 or above was below the national average in 1997, average in 1998. In the end of key stage tests in 1999, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level 4 was well below the national average. The proportion achieving the more challenging level 5 was below the national average. Standards in mathematics at Key Stage 2 were well below those achieved in schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals. The 1999 figures reflect a cohort in which over one third of pupils, were on the register of special educational needs, of whom three had statements. A significant number of pupils had joined the school during Key Stage 2. There is evidence that the intensive focus on numeracy in the current year is having a positive effect on standards.
97. The school has implemented the numeracy initiative successfully and teachers are using the structure well, although on occasions too much time is allocated to the oral and mental session. This reduces the time available to pupils to implement and practise what they have been taught. However, the extensive use of worksheets is inhibiting the progress and independence of some pupils, in particular higher attainers, and the quality of their learning is diminished as a result.
98. In Key Stage 1 pupils add and subtract accurately with numbers of increasing size, successfully perform simple multiplication calculations based upon familiar tables and estimate and measure accurately with standard and non-standard units. They recognise time and clock-faces. They can describe the key attributes of two- and three-dimensional shapes and construct squares and rectangles to given dimensions.
99. The emphasis upon number continues in Key Stage 2. Year 6 pupils have tackled a wide range of work, including, decimals and percentages, area and perimeter of regular and irregular shapes by formula, co-ordinates in four quadrants, and basic geometry. There is a good balance between the different elements of the mathematics curriculum, although there is relatively little evidence of work on probability. Data handling is covered in part through information technology. By the end of Year 6, pupils can interpret confidently, pie charts, bar charts and line graphs. There is good use of practical activities within the numeracy structure. Provision for investigative work remains a positive feature and contributes to the development of pupils' mathematical thinking.
100. The quality of learning is variable across the school. Teachers have an increasingly clear grasp of the standards which pupils should be achieving. However, progress through the key stages, while improving, is better at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1. There is evidence of increasingly challenging work being provided for the higher attaining pupils. The most effective learning is promoted by clear objectives identified in planning, high expectations of teachers and the lively pace of the better lessons. These factors, together with the effective support provided for pupils with special educational needs, underpin the improvements that are becoming evident across the school. The quality of learning for pupils in Year 1 is very good, reflecting the stimulating teaching and high expectations.
101. The oldest pupils show a satisfactory grasp of tables and of the strategies necessary for accurate mental calculations. Teachers recognise the importance of these skills and provide regular opportunities for practice. The development of mental mathematics is now established well. Practical activities are used effectively to support this.
102. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards mathematics. When the teaching is stimulating they are attentive and co-operative. They work well together.
103. The quality of teaching is good, overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Where teaching is best, teachers communicate their enthusiasm for the subject, so inspiring pupils to greater efforts. Learning objectives are often shared with the pupils as the session begins. Written planning is often thin at present and is invariably based on a highly structured, published scheme which the school is trialling. However, although this has some disadvantages, it does give teachers explicit guidance to ensure pupils' progression within a defined period. The major weakness in teaching, at present, is the lack of effectiveness of the marking of pupils' work. Only in a minority of classes is there evidence of the use of developmental comments to give pupils guidance as to how they can improve their work.
104. Teachers provide too few opportunities for the use of mathematics in other subjects. Information technology makes a limited contribution to supporting the mathematics curriculum.

105. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the National Numeracy Strategy and its potential for the teaching of mathematics in the school. The headteacher has undertaken classroom observations of mathematics lessons, and the school has planned to give the subject co-ordinator time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The quality and quantity of learning resources has a positive impact on learning.

## SCIENCE

106. Interpretation of the school's science results are affected by the factors identified in the, "How high are standards section of the report?" The 1999 national tests and statutory teacher assessments show that attainment was well below the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. At the end of Key Stage 2, it was well below the national average for all schools and very low in comparison with schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. There has been no clear trend of improvement in the results of national tests over the last four years. This is due to the, often marked, differences between the successive cohorts of pupils taking the tests. For example, in 1998 the results were above the national average for all schools at Key Stage 2, but the following year, 1999, of the group taking the test, only about half had been in the school for the two years leading up to the tests. In that year, even when compared with schools that have a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, the results were poor. Inspection evidence indicates that at the end of both key stages, pupils' attainment is below national expectations.
107. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the quality of the long and medium-term planning provided to guide teachers' own plans. Pupils' knowledge of scientific vocabulary has increased, and in-service training has been provided to increase teachers' knowledge of the subject. The co-ordinator has been given some time to observe classroom practice. This has helped to ensure that the scheme of work has been implemented appropriately.
108. At Key Stage 1, pupils respond to suggestions about how to find things out; for example, about how marigolds and sweet peas grow. They develop a good deal of knowledge about living things. For example, they study the life cycle of the frog and know the names of the main parts of plants such as the daffodil. Higher attaining pupils can sort creatures such as crickets and centipedes into groups according to the number of legs they have. However, most pupils' investigative skills are not sufficiently developed. For example, they do not say whether what they find out is what they expected.
109. Pupils at Key Stage 2 are able to make generalisations about what they find out when they carry out experiments. For example, in an investigation about light they noticed that the further an object was from the bulb, the smaller and clearer the shadow was. They understand that the form in which materials exist, can change – water can become ice or steam. They use correct scientific terms such as evaporation to describe some of the changes they see. However, discussions with pupils indicate that their knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things is less well developed. For example, they do not have a sufficiently clear idea of the names and positions of the major organs of the human body.
110. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall. Teachers are skilful in managing their classes. This promotes good behaviour, allows pupils to concentrate effectively and contributes well to the rate at which they learn. In the better lessons, the high expectations that the teachers have, especially of pupils' use of appropriate scientific language, impact well on the progress that they make. This was evident in a lesson for pupils in Year 4, in which they were required to use terms such as "variables," and "control." However, the scrutiny of pupils' past work, and that which is displayed, indicates that materials prepared by the teacher and commercially produced worksheets are used too much. This reduces the opportunities for pupils to suggest ways in which experiments might be carried out, and to develop their writing skills. Sometimes in trying to link science teaching with work in other subjects, as part of a "topic", some of the rigour needed to improve standards is lost. The good attitudes and behaviour of pupils contribute well to their learning.
111. The introduction of a science scheme of work based on two commercially available programmes has provided the potential for continuity and progression. However, a lack of confidence and subject knowledge, on the part of some teachers, has resulted in parts of the scheme receiving more emphasis and coverage than others. In addition, the lack of systematic, and consistently applied, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress makes it difficult for teachers to ensure that tasks are matched

closely to the needs of pupils. The school is about to revise its policy and scheme of work, so that it accords with new National Curriculum guidelines.

## **ART**

112. During the inspection it was only possible to see two lessons in art; one in each key stage. From these lessons, a scrutiny of previous work on display, and discussions with the co-ordinator and other teachers, inspectors judge that the standards achieved by the oldest pupils are better than those expected of their age group. By the time they leave the school they have well developed skills in observational drawing and the detailed use of a wide variety of materials. There are some good examples of Year 6 pupils working on fine detail in the styles of Turner and Constable. They are very precise in their use of colour and technique. Earlier in the key stage, pupils are able to discuss which artists work they like, and why. They use appropriate vocabulary. Framed prints, donated by a well-known supermarket, are used well to assist the pupil's appreciation of fine art.
113. Pupils make good progress as they pass through the school. In the two lessons observed, opportunities were given for pupils to relate their work to other aspects of the curriculum. At Key Stage 1, pupils are introduced to the primary colours and colour mixing. A good example of this was seen in a display based upon Monet's work, where pupils had used layered tissue to create the different colours in the water. They make well-observed drawings and paintings of portraits of people they know. Younger pupils use finger painting techniques to complete a large painting in the style of Hiroshigi. At Key Stage 2, pupils make Viking jewellery and select appropriate colours and materials to complete the design. Year 3 pupils make compositions based on Rangoli patterns by taking rubbings from a three-dimensional design, using wax as medium. Throughout the Key Stage 2, pupils continue to explore the works and techniques of a wide range of artists from a variety of cultures.
114. Visitors help to enhance pupils' learning. For example, when a specialist in textiles from a local college had assisted the teaching in Year 1, pupils had the experience of painting on silk.
115. Pupils display interest and enthusiasm toward their learning and enjoy their work. Behaviour is good, and in the lesson observed the pupils were anxious to complete and share their work. They co-operate in using resources and treat them well. These factors have a positive effect on their learning.
116. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good and there is a comprehensive scheme to support the teaching. The standards are good, and planning is related to the scheme of work effectively. Planning often supports learning in other subjects.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

117. The oldest pupils in the school attain higher levels than expected for pupils of similar ages. Pupils make good progress through the school. They learn to use a wide variety of tools equipment and strategies. Their projects are often linked to other subjects, and this enhances learning. Pupils at Key Stage 1 make a range of junk models. They talk about how they made them with great enthusiasm. In Year 1, pupils were able to express views on whether they thought their designs appropriate. Their puppet bags and food technology activities enabled them to learn how to follow instructions and complete a task. They could then use their product or eat it.
118. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to develop their skills using a design notebook, which they keep all the way through the school. They design and make a wide variety of articles, which they produce using a more sophisticated range of tools. In Year 5, pupils following a published format were given the task of designing and making a musical instrument. From the original design, and using strengthening and joining materials, they made a range of artefacts, which they decorated and varnished. They then put together a performance using their own instruments.
119. Pupils develop a range of skills and everyone learns to sew, join various materials, and use a variety of tools. There is good progression in the subject from the Nursery to Year 6. Pupils are challenged by their teachers, and are required to use their notebooks as an integral part of the design and make process. The subject is well resourced and all resources are accessible and safely stored and have a positive impact on the teaching and learning of the subject.

120. Whilst pupils evaluate their work in a discussion, there is only limited assessment of their artefacts by teachers. The assessment and recording of progress is not yet sufficiently focused on a clear analysis of the skills pupils have developed from year to year.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

121. The standards of the oldest pupils are broadly as expected for their age group. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 1 is good. At Key Stage 1, pupils are able to identify the countries in the British Isles. They know the compass points: north, south, east and west. They make plans for a garden and use a key when drawing maps of their classroom. Pupils also work with routes and journeys that the pupils and people make in the local area. They can explain, using appropriate geographical words, how they come to school and are aware of the people in the community who help them. In Year 1, mapping skills are developed effectively through understanding the difference between the United Kingdom and the British Isles. A challenging exercise, using play dough, helps pupils to learn the shape of England Scotland and Wales. Pupils in Year 2 write letters and research about life in Poland and through their science topic they learn about world food sources.
122. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 are satisfactory. Pupils make maps and plans using symbols and keys. They use four figure grid references, measure direction and distance, follow routes and make good use of atlases. However, the progress made is inconsistent across year groups. In the better lessons, very good teaching identifies the links with the previous learning, challenges the pupils to think, uses enquiry skills effectively and links work across other curriculum areas. Pupils are beginning to learn about the story of water and the journey it makes. They apply their mapping skills, as in a lesson for pupils in Year 5 when they designed their own city. Older pupils learn the correct terminology for the subject. In a very good lesson for Year 6 pupils, they used twenty different words such as “meander” and “erosion.” The clear emphasis placed by the teacher on geographical vocabulary had a positive impact on the progress pupils made.
123. However, the school still has to ensure that learning is based firmly on what has already been taught, as highlighted in the last report. It is not doing so well at this. For example, work in some classes involves revisiting areas already covered, but without sufficient progression or challenge. Pupils use maps regularly in their history topics to identify the position of continents and places; for instance, Africa, Egypt and the River Nile. The visits and field trips that are planned each year for the pupils to have first hand experience of the environment are a strength of the subject.
124. The co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of opportunities in geography. She is in the course of preparing a new policy and scheme of work.

## **HISTORY**

125. There is insufficient evidence to make reliable judgements about standards, teaching and learning at Key Stage 1. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 2, but scrutiny of displays, past and present work and discussions with teachers and pupils indicate that the standards attained by the oldest pupils are broadly in line with the expectations for their age.
126. Younger pupils learn how to construct a timeline through the teacher using good relevant vocabulary, asking good historical questions, and discussing the age of the teddies the pupils have brought in. At the end of the lesson the pupils are able to see where their teddy is and know why it is placed there. In other work at Key Stage 1, pupils are able to place events in order, and explain some of the differences and similarities between schooldays, now and then; for example, between toys today, and toys in the past. At Key Stage 2, pupils learn about many different peoples, including the Romans, Anglo Saxons, Vikings, Tudors, Greeks, Mere Green residents and World War II. A good feature of recent achievement is the work reflecting life since 1000, which forms part of the millennium project displayed in the school hall. Pupils in Key Stage 2, develop a sense of chronology. This is enhanced when teachers enrich the subject through inviting historical actors, such as the ‘Tudor Formal Guard.’ Pupils’ learning is improved through these opportunities to role-play. However, there is little evidence that pupils question why people in the past acted as they did and this limits their learning.



127. Good progress has been made in some areas at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection. For example, the knowledge element of the history programme of study is now being covered well. However, there are still insufficient opportunities for structured, extended writing.
128. Procedures for assessment are still not sufficiently well developed and the results of assessment do not yet inform planning effectively. The progressive acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding are not assured, and this year very few visits have taken place.
129. The local history project on Mere Green memories has given the older pupils an insight into what it used to be like in the past through studying maps, photographs, plans and questioning older residents. The entrance to the Year 6 classroom is through an Anderson shelter. It is surrounded by pupils' work associated with, *Carrie's War*, a story of a girl's experience in wartime Britain. *The Terrible Tudors* is read to give another viewpoint of what life was like in the sixteenth century. This sort of provision considerably enhances learning. Good research skills are being developed in independent work for higher attaining pupils.
130. The links between history and geography are good. For example, teachers use maps to locate the countries and places of the topic to be studied in history. Links with art and design and technology are also well developed. There are some very good representations of Egyptians, Julius Caesar, Queen Victoria and Claudius. There is a hardworking co-ordinator who is aware of the changes required for the new curriculum. A start has been made in preparing to monitor the subject and rewrite a new policy for the new curriculum.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

131. There have been exciting developments in provision for this subject in the school since the last inspection. Information and communications technology has been given high priority, the quantity of hardware and software has increased enormously and a new policy and schemes of work have been introduced focusing on progressive gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers' knowledge and understanding have improved and they are now much more confident and competent in using information and communications technology across the curriculum. The subject is not regarded simply as another teaching tool: it is now used more strategically than at the time of the last inspection to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and to enhance the standards they reach in many areas of learning.
132. Standards in Year 6 are well above those expected for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 nationally. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, follow a school-produced 'Primary Colours' scheme in which they chart their own progress in acquiring skills at various levels. Targets at lower levels include "I can press the left mouse button to make things work", whilst at the higher levels there appears "I can search the Internet for information using more than one search criteria". Examination of pupils' course booklets during the inspection, revealed that they are taking responsibility for their own learning and that many are working at Level 5. For example, they show ability to select textual and pictorial information from various sources, prepare it into a form suitable for processing, scan it into the computer and print it out. Many of these skills are refined whilst the pupils follow a carefully sequenced scheme in which they search library-banked information on compact disks using combinations of 'keyword', 'author' and 'topic' data. As part of the programme, pupils also acquire technical words such as "hyperlink" and "multimedia" by using them in context. As a matter of routine, Year 6 pupils use laptop computers to word process in a range of subject areas. They confidently create files, store, amend and edit text, spell check and manipulate fonts and spreadsheets to produce very polished documents.
133. The above competence is apparent most noticeably in Year 6 and is now being cultivated systematically down the key stage. Standards of attainment in middle and lower Key Stage 2 classes are generally in line with those found in other schools, and computers are used regularly to hone literacy skills such as spelling, numeracy skills such as number bond manipulation, and science skills such as classifying, ordering and graphing information.
134. By the age of seven, most pupils, including those with special needs and English as an additional language, have developed appropriate levels of skill and can save, retrieve and print work, sometimes without the help of adults. Higher attaining pupils know how to access menus in compact disk packages

and how to close and open programs. Pupils have acquired important keyboard and mouse skills and regularly complete spelling programs on the personal computer. They work through mathematical compact disk packages to help speed up mental arithmetic, and they search for information, categorise and enter it into charts as part of science. Children entering the reception and nursery classes are quickly introduced to computers and to using them as part of their everyday work. Pupils in the Speech and Language Resource Base are comfortable working with computers and confidently tackle work set in class, for example putting numbers in order and learning place value.

135. As was also the case at the time of the last inspection, information and communications technology is not taught as a separate subject on the timetable but is included in lessons for other subjects. Although no direct teaching was observed during the inspection it is clear that the gains in skills, and the positive attitudes evident in Years 6 and in other classes, could only have been achieved as a result of determined teaching. Detailed inspection of teachers' planning and pupils' work on display and in exercise books suggests that teaching is satisfactory to good in both key stages and is very good in Year 6. The very good teaching seen at the end of the school is influencing teaching in other classes. Most teachers are clear about how to use computers to help them in what they want to achieve in lessons, and many are keen to use the Internet and equipment such as digital cameras in class. Although there are systems in place to monitor gains in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in upper Key Stage 2 classes, monitoring in lower classes consists predominantly of checking coverage and ensuring that all pupils have had their turn on classroom activities. The school now needs to develop procedures for assessing how securely individual pupils in all classes have grasped skills, knowledge and procedures and how well they can explain their work.
136. The subject is very well co-ordinated. In keeping with principles of best value, where schools challenge themselves to update their provision, the co-ordinator encourages the latest elements of technology to be taught. Resources have improved very significantly since the last inspection and there are ambitious plans nearing fruition to network the whole school, provide a very professional information and communications technology suite and establish the school as a centre of expertise among those primary schools that use the Birmingham Grid for Learning. The school has the services of a part-time technician and possesses lots of high quality software and hardware to help teachers deliver all elements of the National Curriculum.
137. As an example of how the school has successfully taught the 'control' aspect of the National Curriculum using its advanced resources, three pupils demonstrated their prowess using the schools' resources to the inspector by assembling a robotic vehicle out of Lego. They then attached a computerised motor, wrote a set of programmed instructions and downloaded these via an infrared module to the vehicle. They then tested its mobility and modified the original program to make the vehicle select another direction whenever it encountered objects in its path. It is often hard for inspectors to separate what pupils have learnt in school from what they have learnt at home. Whilst it is true that these three pupils are all familiar with the Internet and use email to contact friends, they have been able to apply and extend their ability through their experiences and the provision in Mere Green School.

## MUSIC

138. Judgements about standards in Key Stage 2 have been supported by lesson observations, performances by the Key Stage 2 choir and an evaluation of the contribution music plays in assemblies, and in drama. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 1, but the contribution of the Key Stage 1 choir, music in assemblies and evidence from tapes and planning have supported judgements.
139. Achievement and learning in music are generally good, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be in line with the national average. An appropriate amount of time now is spent on the subject. Music benefits from the expertise and skills of the two co-ordinators, who provide good models for performance. Their high expectations are influencing both key stage choirs and the quality of learning in lessons.
140. Pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 sing tunefully, join in appropriately with piano accompaniment and experiment with keeping long notes and rests. They make good progress with their diction. For example, most can sing more difficult verses clearly by the end of the lesson. At Key Stage 2, pupils learn to assemble their own ideas and compose and perform simple pieces. For instance, they explore rhythm

patterns and use harmonious chords for 'calypso rhythms' on tuned and untuned percussion. At both key stages using instruments and exploring sounds are well established.

141. Pupils enjoy music and all are given the opportunity to perform and compose in lessons. They learn to perform with others, handle instruments appropriately and with care. The choirs have an expectation of themselves as performers and act in a mature way. Their contribution in enhancing concerts and celebrations is valued by the school. Pupils also perform confidently for wider audiences in the local community.
142. All the lessons observed were taken by the music co-ordinators. A part-time specialist teacher is deployed at Key Stage 2. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are lively, well planned and challenging. For instance, pupils in Year 4 listen to the *Viennese Clock*, and produce simple 'rondos' for voice and instrument. Effective teaching of skills is also supporting good standards of performance. Pupils are taught how to hold instruments correctly, keep the beat and join in appropriately when singing 'rounds'. Clear evaluation of termly plans also show what aspects of the music curriculum have been covered, and there is evidence of assessment of pupils' simple notation and recording.
143. The co-ordinators manage the subject well. Resources are appropriate for learning, but are less representative of cultures other than European.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. Only two physical education lessons, both athletics sessions in Key Stage 2, were observed during the inspection. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 1 and no judgement is possible on standards in that key stage. While standards in athletics are in line with those expected for the age group in Key Stage 2, no judgement is possible on pupils' performance in the other elements of the curriculum, such as gymnastics, dance or games. The school does, however, provide a broad and balanced programme that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.
145. Pupils at Key Stage 2 show increasing confidence in the basic athletics skills of jumping and landing. In one lesson observed, Year 6 pupils were learning to develop control and co-ordination in the triple jump. After a brisk warm-up session, they worked individually and in small groups to practise their skills. The quality of learning in the session was good, promoted effectively by the lively questioning and intervention of the teacher who made appropriate use of demonstration and pupils' analyses of the work of others to identify the strengths and areas for development in individual performances. Such practice enables pupils to develop a sharp critical faculty, which subsequently enhances their own work. There was a positive focus on issues of health and safety and pupils were asked about the effects of exercise on their bodies. Pupils of all abilities, including those with identified special educational needs, have good opportunities to make progress and build on their previous learning in such a context.
146. All pupils in Key Stage 2 have an opportunity to swim for one half term in each year. The school estimates that around three-quarters of pupils achieve the swimming standard (25 metres unaided) by the end of Key Stage 2. However, the school does not maintain readily accessible records of this information.
147. On the basis of the lessons observed, the quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory and they make at least satisfactory progress. Learning is most effective when lessons have clear objectives, a brisk pace and pupils have the opportunity to assess the quality of their work and modify their performance in the light of this experience.
148. Pupils' attitudes to physical education are good. They enjoy the subject and are usually well motivated. They listen attentively, carry out instructions without fuss and respond well to routines and expected standards of behaviour.
149. No judgement is possible on teaching in Key Stage 1. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 2. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and they plan lessons well, building on previous learning and developing skills systematically. They structure lessons appropriately to ensure that pupils warm up and cool down appropriately. They manage pupils well, with a clear emphasis on safety. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and there are many opportunities for the pupils to plan and evaluate their performances. This

helps standards to improve. A number of schemes of work have been adopted to support the different elements of the curriculum, and these provide clear guidance for staff in their planning.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

150. Pupils' attainment is in line with the locally agreed syllabus at the end of each key stage. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection. Evidence was also gained from the scrutiny of pupils' work, classroom displays and from some teachers' plans. The good relationships between teachers and pupils ensured that challenging discussions took place in the lessons observed.
151. The overview of the subject reveals there is a lot of content to be covered and it was found, through talking to some pupils in Year 5, that they had an understanding of the major world faiths and that they understand the significance of the teachings of Christianity.
152. There was no detailed planning from the subject overview, or evidence of clear learning objectives in the plans. The lack of formal assessment and monitoring opportunities is a matter that the school is aware of and is starting to deal with. Resources for the subject are good. They are stored appropriately and in constant use to support the teaching and learning in the subject.
153. Pupils in a Year 5 lesson were able to discuss with each other the rites and practices of birth customs in the Christian and Hindu faiths. They played out each naming ceremony, and then answered questions from the rest of the group. This enabled the pupils to recognise similarities and differences. The literature pupils were reading in their English lessons provided the background for the teaching about the Hindu faith. Pupils are able to not only learn about other faiths but they also learn from them. This is a good feature. Pupils in Year 3 are able to identify sacred objects in the Christian and Muslim faiths and handle items appropriately.
154. The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development. However, the overuse of worksheets often denies pupils opportunity to record their thoughts in their own way.
155. The locally agreed syllabus is due to be revised in 2000. The school has considered the guidance received from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and is preparing a new overview in the light of local and national developments.