

INSPECTION REPORT

PALFREY JUNIOR SCHOOL

Walsall

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104160

Headteacher: Mrs A E W Price

Reporting inspector: Mrs C A Field
9479

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th May 2000

Inspection number: 190037

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7-11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Afzal
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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Mr T Morgan	Lay inspector		Pupil's attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
Mr D Carrington	Team inspector	Mathematics Information technology Geography Religious education Equality of opportunity	
Mrs A Hopwood	Team inspector		
Mr M James	Team inspector	Science Art Design and technology History Physical education	Quality and range of learning opportunities
Mr G Warner	Team inspector	English Music English as an additional language Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in Palfrey, a community near to the centre of Walsall that has been in receipt of City Challenge regeneration funding due to the high incidence of social and economic deprivation. A wide range of community groups uses the older parts of the school building. There are 276 pupils on roll: 125 boys and 151 girls aged between seven and eleven years. The number of pupils on roll has fallen over recent years. The pupils' attainment on entry is well below average. Forty per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. Ninety-seven pupils have special educational needs (35 per cent); a proportion that is above the national average. Ten of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Ninety five per cent of pupils in the school come from homes where English is not the first language. Some pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak, read and write in English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Palfrey Junior School is an improving school. It is very effective in meeting the special needs of its pupils. Good provision is made for meeting the needs of those who start with limited command of spoken or written English. The classrooms are enjoyable places to be, with good relationships underpinning the good learning taking place. All pupils benefit from the caring and supportive response of the adults working in school who are a united team and determined to give the best possible chance for all to succeed in their studies.

National strategies to support teaching and learning in English and mathematics have been implemented to good effect, and standards in these subjects are lifting, slowly but surely. The management is focused on the things that matter, although the systems in place to analyse with accuracy what works best in school are not as effective as they should be. Targets for the next few years are realistic and achievable. The current Year 3 has a much more advantaged profile than that of previous years, and by 2003 their attainments should compare well with the national average. Parents are supportive, and the school has strong links with the community it serves. The school has good capacity to make sustained improvements.

What the school does well

- Enables most pupils to make good progress in English, mathematics, science, religious education, art and geography because of good quality teaching.
- Provides a rich curriculum that gives pupils worthwhile experiences that lead to satisfactory learning in all other subjects.
- Makes good provision for pupils' special educational needs so that they make good progress against the individual targets set for them.
- Dovetails various programmes of work to good effect in meeting the needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language.
- Has determined and insightful leadership from the headteacher. She has set clear educational direction and has built a united team of staff and governors who show good commitment to raising educational standards as the top priority.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics, science and information technology are not yet high enough.
- School evaluation and improvement processes are not underpinned sufficiently well by systematic and rigorous ways of finding out what could be better and what is done well.
- Lesson planning lacks consistency in stating what the learning gains are to be for different pupils, and the progress of some suffers as a result. This affects assessment and target-setting which is not sharp enough.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Good progress has been made in improving the key issues raised at the time of the previous inspection in 1996. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, and standards, although below average, are lifting largely due to the successful implementation of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies. Short-term planning is better than it was. It could have sharper focus on the gains teachers expect pupils to make in each lesson to ensure that progress is as good as can be year on year. Assessment is usefully informing whole-school target setting but is not yet used consistently, either by co-ordinators to set subject targets or teachers to assist their planning of future lessons. Good procedures are now in place for helping pupils who have been absent from school to settle into routines and get back to work at the right level. A new information technology (IT) suite has been established with good resources that are being developed further. All aspects of the information technology curriculum are taught, but some are not covered in sufficient depth. Standards of achievement are currently below the level expected for eleven-year-olds. Very good attention has been given to widening the use of community languages in communication with parents. The school has made excellent progress in monitoring and promoting improved attendance. Monitoring of other aspects of the school's work is less advanced and is a key issue for management.

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	E	E	E	D
Mathematics	E*	E*	E	E
Science	E*	E*	E*	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Similar schools are those with between 35 per cent - 50 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals. Because of the very high proportion of pupils with English as an additional language comparisons made with similar schools should be treated cautiously.

The above results show that in the 1999 National Curriculum tests, pupils achieved well below average results in English and mathematics. The results in science placed the school in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. When results are compared to those of similar schools they are well below average overall. It is the teams' judgement on the basis of this inspection that standards are improving. Findings from inspection judge standards to be below average in English, mathematics and science. There has clearly been good impact from the school's successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. There are also good signs that results in mathematics will be lifted by the positive influence of the National Numeracy Strategy which was introduced in September. Since they started in Year 3, the pupils who took the 1999 tests have all made good gains in their language and literacy skills, although their writing skills remain weak. Good attention paid to promoting the vocabulary of science has helped pupils move forward in their learning in this subject. Standards in information technology are below average and average in religious education. The school's targets are certainly achievable if the quality of teaching seen during week of the inspection is sustained and the pupils' learning not interrupted by extended periods of absence.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are willing learners who try hard to do their best for their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Occasional lapses occur when the style and content of the lesson fails to sufficiently challenge some pupils, often boys, who switch off and become restless. Behaviour in the playground is too boisterous at times and not helped by the stark nature of the play-space.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are keen to take responsibility when given the opportunity. They work together co-operatively and show great respect for one another's beliefs and views.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school has made excellent progress in targeting improved attendance, and is being well supported by most parents in its endeavour.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	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.

Ninety-seven lessons were observed during the week of inspection, of these fifty-five were of good quality and five very good. The teaching is judged to be of good quality overall with no unsatisfactory teaching observed. It is generally good in English, mathematics, science, religious education, art and geography lessons throughout the school and results in most pupils making good progress in learning in these subjects even though standards are below average. Skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are well supported and do well as a result. In the very best lessons, typically in Year 3 and Year 6, teachers plan work that is challenging for all pupils and ensure that the lessons move forward at a brisk pace. Generally, lesson planning is a weakness as too little account is taken of potentially high-attaining pupils' prior learning and sometimes they do not make the gains of which they are capable. Assessment tends to be undertaken at the end of term and used as a summary of achievements rather than as a tool for tracking progress and a useful aid to guiding planning. Insufficient use is made of marking to identify how pupils may improve their work and aim higher.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school has an appropriate curriculum that provides a good range of interesting and stimulating activities for pupils to experience.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Individual education plans include measurable targets that are regularly reviewed, and used consistently to assist the academic and social development of pupils with special needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Programmes of work are well co-ordinated for pupils learning English as an additional language. Sensitive arrangements ensure that pupils returning from extended holidays, or who are new to the school, settle in well and are provided with appropriate work to help build confidence and good learning habits.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils' social development is satisfactory; their moral and cultural development is good. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory but the assemblies are not used to best effect to promote opportunities for reflection and contemplation.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Health, welfare and child protection matters are given good attention, and the school cares well for pupils. Procedures to monitor pupils' educational development lack rigour, and the results of assessment are not used consistently to assist the planning of sufficiently challenging lessons for some pupils. This aspect is unsatisfactory.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. The school has developed some good strategies for involving parents in their child's education and more links are in the pipeline.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership. Satisfactory management. The headteacher gives strong and purposeful leadership to the school by setting clear educational direction, inspiring, influencing and motivating staff well. The senior management team is still evolving its role and responsibilities and is not yet sufficiently involved in school evaluation matters. Subject co-ordinators have had limited opportunities to find out what is happening in classrooms. Management is at a point of change and sees with clarity what steps are needed to establish effective systems to monitor school performance.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body is newly established and is still getting to grips with new roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, it has good insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is committed to supporting further improvement. Governors are giving adequate attention to the pursuit of Best Value principles.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The headteacher has made a useful start in gathering information to help with assessing school performance. Findings are being used to help raise standards but the systems in place to support this are too informal. Others in school have been insufficiently involved in the process to date. Monitoring has been too ad hoc and there is no system in place to ensure that the very best teaching in the school is shared and promoted.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There is a good level of staffing and adequate accommodation and resources to support the effective delivery of the curriculum. The school makes very effective use of additional grants to provide for pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. Very good use has been made of funds to deliver the additional literacy strategy and pre-SATS booster classes in Year 6.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school, make good progress and grow into mature young people as a result. • Teaching is good and parents are kept well informed about how children are doing. • Parents feel comfortable to approach the school with problems or concerns and the school works closely with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No issues raised.

Parents hold positive views about the school and the inspection team agrees with them.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. At the time of the previous inspection four years ago, school standards were below average with many pupils not reaching the national standards in English and mathematics. This was identified as a key issue for improvement. Pupils were said to make steady progress as they moved through the school, although some did not make sufficient gains in English and mathematics lessons due to weaknesses in teachers' planning. Standards in information technology were judged to be below average and satisfactory in science and religious education. The results of National Curriculum tests in the year of the inspection, and the intervening years, show well below average results overall, with science results last year in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. The findings of this inspection show standards at the end of the key stage to be below average in English, mathematics, science and information technology and average in religious education. Standards, although steadily improving, are still a key issue for the school to address.
2. The school's baseline assessment shows that pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 started school with well below average attainments. Year 3 has a broadly average profile. A significant minority in the current Year 6 had no experience of either spoken or written English language when they joined the school. Forty per cent of this cohort learn English as an additional language. Fifty per cent of pupils in Year 6 have special educational needs. The learning of some older pupils has been curtailed during their time at Junior school by prolonged absences, usually because of visits to families in India and Pakistan, although some have missed schooling due to illness.
3. There has been improvement in rates of progress across the curriculum, largely due to consistently effective teaching and learning in language, literacy and numeracy. Through a very well conceived programme of additional literacy lessons, pupils with delays in getting to grips with reading and writing in English have made good gains in their understanding and use of English. English and mathematics booster classes in Year 6 have enabled pupils to answer questions in test papers much more confidently, and not be thrown by the phrasing of the question, which the school has found to be the case in past years. Target groups in all years have been identified for more intensive teaching of basic skills, and this has had good impact on the progress these pupils make. The curriculum is well rounded but has a sharp focus on literacy and numeracy, to enable pupils to develop the key skills they will need in later life. The impact of the National Numeracy Strategy, introduced last September, has been considerable, and standards are beginning to lift. There are shortcomings in the planning due to the inconsistent use of specific objectives that ensure sufficient challenge for different pupils, especially higher-attaining pupils. This is a refinement that would make progress more even year on year. The school is building a successful partnership with parents to advance further the standards and rates of progress the pupils achieve.
4. Results show that in the 1999 National Curriculum tests, pupils achieved well below average results in English and mathematics and very low results in science. Results in science placed the school in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. Moreover when results are compared to those of similar schools they are well below average overall. The school's results have been improving very steadily over recent years, lifting from a well below to below average level overall but more quickly in English than the other two subjects. There has clearly been good impact from the school's successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. There are good signs that results in mathematics will be lifted by the positive influence of the National Numeracy Strategy introduced last September. This is particularly the case in numeracy hours where greater emphasis on more speedy and accurate problem solving is helping the pupils develop sharper skills that they can use confidently.

5. When looking at what the pupils who took the 1999 tests could do when they started in Year 3, it is evident that all have gained in their language and literacy skills due to the good additional provision made, although writing skills remain weak. Writing has been targeted for intensive support later this year but could usefully be included much earlier in the school's action planning. The early morning spelling sessions each day in all classes have been a positive element in supporting the pupils' developing communication skills.
6. Useful monitoring of literacy hours by the co-ordinator and others has helped in the teachers' planning and the purchase of good resources. In English lessons, pupils develop appropriate skills in reading, although the overall level of attainment in reading is below average at the end of the key stage. Pupils make out unfamiliar words from clues from the text and by using phonic skills appropriately. They generally read fluently but with little expression; few are able to get below the surface of the text to gain greater understanding beyond the literal. Reading practice is being supported satisfactorily but the teachers' assessment of individual reading skills is rather 'hit and miss'. Writing skills are well below average throughout the school. A significant minority of pupils do not have the key skills of planning and structuring their work coherently. The development of extended writing is unsatisfactory. The school has not yet planned sufficiently to develop writing skills in other subjects. There is also insufficient use of information technology in classrooms to support writing skills, however. Pupils have satisfactory speaking and good listening skills and are confident to speak in class. For example, in a discussion in Year 6 about different poetic forms, pupils spoke about haiku, limericks and kennings, explaining differences and which form might be appropriate to use in writing their own poems about war. The accurate use of Standard English is a weakness, however, and often pupils use only limited vocabulary when putting forward their ideas. The literacy hour has been introduced successfully and benefit is beginning to be seen in standards of reading and writing.
7. Standards in numeracy are not far off average at the end of the key stage. Good attention is paid to developing the pupils' arithmetical competence but older pupils are often still too slow to work out the answer. In the best lessons the teacher sets a brisk pace to learning and starts the session with a game to get pupils' 'mental cogs' in gear. There is good use of numeracy to support work in other subjects such as science, for example. The co-ordinator has led the subject enthusiastically, although to date there has been limited time and opportunity for her to monitor the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Although there are signs that the school is moving in the direction of good educational provision in mathematics, the pace of change needs to be quickened if standards are to get the required boost.
8. Standards in science are below average at the end of the key stage. Most pupils are confident to explain about different life processes and have good vocabulary of key scientific terms to describe why materials change when heated and cooled, for example. Older pupils know how electrical circuits work and can build a switched circuit to change flow. Pupils apply themselves well to scientific discovery and are adept at the practical aspects of the subject. The shortcomings are in recorded work. Limitations in written English reduce the success rate and limit pupils achieving higher levels. For example, in writing up experiments, labelling of diagrams is accurate but sometimes the evaluation and analysis of practical work relies on the use of a narrow range of English with poor spellings. In discussing science work with pupils, it is clear they know and understand much more than their written work suggests.
9. Pupils achieve below average standards in information technology because they have insufficient opportunities to build up their knowledge and skills in the subject. Very few pupils have computers at home, so they start school with a minimal level of skills, knowledge and understanding. What they learn at school cannot be reinforced at home. The computer suite offers good resources but cannot accommodate the intense programme that is required if pupils are to get sufficient opportunity to practice and refine skills. There are not enough computers in the body of the school either for the work to be ongoing or to give full scope for cross-curricular use. The few computers in class bases were used inconsistently during the inspection week. Despite the

restrictions, pupils are interested in the work and they put in good effort and made satisfactory progress in the lessons observed.

10. Overall, standards in religious education are as expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and Judaism. More than this, they also develop a strong moral sense and a clear understanding of what makes life special. They can discuss, with thoughtfulness, some of the views people from different religions hold, and consider similarities between them. Good use is made of pupils' own experiences to support learning in religious education. Younger pupils have good knowledge about key aspects of Christianity. For example, in a lesson in a Year 4 class, the pupils spoke with good knowledge and understanding about the symbolism of the 'Christingle', drawing connections with other religions that use light as symbol of goodness. Pupils show respect and tolerance for the beliefs of others.
11. Nearly every pupil in school has English as an additional language and over half of the current Year 6 had imperfect knowledge of English when they joined the school. The majority of pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress in basic literacy skills. Most individual targets relate to improving reading, speaking and listening skills and are of good quality. The school's commitment to the improvement of standards in these areas has a beneficial effect on the pupils' progress and attainment across the curriculum. Where tasks are matched to their attainment levels, pupils respond very well. They show good levels of concentration. Pupils get on together well and co-operate at appropriate level at work and play. The school is harmonious, happy and free from any racial tensions.
12. Teaching and support staff, some of whom speak a number of community languages, have a very good understanding of the needs of pupils with limited English. A good induction programme set up in response to a key issue last time ensures that pupils are given an individual programme to enable them to make up ground lost by prolonged absence. In-class support and withdrawal for target teaching, although complex, is effective in meeting these pupils' language needs and enabling them to benefit in their learning. The dovetailing of various strategies to support pupils' learning, many of whom have both language and special educational needs works very effectively in helping individuals to maximise their potential and do as well as expected in their achievements.
13. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of specified individual learning targets and the effective support provided by the learning support assistants and voluntary workers. Consequently pupils with special educational needs generally achieve well. The school's commitment to these pupils is considerable and has a beneficial impact on their progress and attainment across the curriculum.
14. The school has set realistic targets for all pupils in the school, but they could be more ambitious to reflect the school's determination and drive to raise standards still higher. The current Year 3 has a much more academic profile than that of previous years and is on track to achieve broadly average results in 2003. It is unlikely that results will compare favourably with the national average until this point but there is nothing to stop results being as good as those in similar schools. The school is aware that monitoring and evaluation have not been given the concerted attention required and that development planning, whilst successful on a broad front, has lacked clarity in identifying what action is needed specifically to raise standards. Management has been successful in making improvements to a number of aspects of school life and is well placed to carry on with the necessary action to enable sustained improvement.

Pupils attitudes, values and personal development

15. Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has maintained the good features in the way it promotes positive attitudes and values and has given good attention to raising awareness about attendance matters with parents and the community. The school is happy and free from racial tension. The level of attendance is broadly in line with the national average for primary schools. Pupils are willing learners who try hard to do their best for their teachers. Parents strongly agree that the school helps their children to grow into mature and responsible young people.
16. Throughout all classes, pupils show a positive approach to learning and enjoy being in school. Almost all parents say that their children like coming to school; pupils clearly appreciate what is being provided for them in lessons. Most pupils listen carefully to instructions, work well independently or in co-operation with others and show an enthusiasm to do well. They respond eagerly to questions and accept that other pupils may have a different point of view. Many pupils explain confidently what they are doing and are keen to show their work. Almost all respond well to challenge. For instance, in a Year 3 geography lesson pupils were given a pile of travel brochures from which they had to select a resort or country and then find information about the weather and natural attractions – all within a set time-scale in the lesson. Many persevere when they find things difficult, learning from their mistakes. The fun of learning is frequently evident.
17. Parents are pleased with the standard of behaviour and the inspection judgements support these positive views. The good behaviour in lessons makes a major contribution to effective learning and to the quality of school life in general. There is a pleasant air of orderliness without the suppression of natural exuberance. Pupils know what is expected of them and they usually behave appropriately, not for any reward, but because they know it is the right thing to do. Most are polite and considerate to one another, to staff and to visitors – doors are held open for others and ‘please’ and ‘thank-you’ are regularly heard. They take good care of equipment and furniture. The behaviour of a minority of pupils deteriorates during breaks in the playground when there is some ‘play fighting’ and harassment. The lack of any play features, seats and quiet areas in the playground is a contributory factor to this misbehaviour. When instances of unacceptable behaviour occur in the classroom, they are mostly dealt with swiftly and effectively but this is not always so in the playground. Class teachers tend to deal with behaviour management in their own way but within the code and rules agreed. The most successful approach observed during the inspection was when positive reinforcement was used; no time was wasted in sorting out the problem and no time was lost to learning. There have been no exclusions.
18. Relationships throughout the school are good. All the staff, teaching and non-teaching, are very good role models and make every effort to form positive, helpful relationships with all pupils. There are some close friendships between pupils in classes and many pupils of different ages relate well with one another. In the extracurricular clubs, pupils mix well together. Pupils co-operate in pairs when working in classes and collaborate effectively when required to engage in group or whole class activities. They show an interest in what other pupils are achieving and appreciate the efforts of those less able than themselves.
19. The personal development of pupils is good. Parents say that the school is very successful in reinforcing family values and encouraging pupils to become mature and responsible members of the community. The opportunities for taking responsibility, given in all classes, are eagerly sought and effectively discharged. Pupils in Year 6 are given responsibilities outside the classroom but these are relatively routine tasks requiring limited initiative. An awareness of the needs of the less fortunate is evident from the well-supported collections for charities such as the National Children’s Home and Kosovan refugees. Social skills are developed in clubs and in sporting activities that are for mixed age groups and genders. The residential visit to Kingswood for pupils in Years 5 and 6 provides valuable experience of a different social environment as well as

presenting them with academic and physical challenges that contribute much to their personal development.

20. There has been a great improvement in attendance since the last inspection. Attendance is now satisfactory although still just below the national average for primary schools. Extended family visits to India and Pakistan by a few pupils account for most of the absences; the majority of pupils attend school very regularly. Registration is carried out accurately and effectively, enabling lessons to start on time, which has a positive effect on pupils' learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. Teaching was reported as being mainly satisfactory last time the school was inspected, but with some variation. Twenty-five per cent of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. A key issue was teachers' use of assessment to assist with planning appropriately for different pupils. Short-term planning was also found to be a key weakness and did not identify what different pupils were expected to learn. These weaknesses resulted in some pupils not making sufficient progress in learning, especially in English, mathematics and information technology. Teaching today is much better than it was in English and mathematics. Successful implementation of national strategies in literacy and numeracy has given structure to teaching and learning. The teaching of information technology is broadly satisfactory, but insufficient use of computers across the curriculum is holding back the pupils who have the potential for much higher achievement. Staff training is still on the agenda for further development.
22. Ninety-seven lessons were observed during the inspection: forty were satisfactory, fifty-five were good and five were very good. Teaching is good overall throughout the school, and this is a key reason why standards are lifting. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection. All teachers were observed to teach English and mathematics. The school has examined the methods teachers use, and established a planning system that ensures a much better match of work for individual pupils. Good assessments are made of pupils with English language needs and those who have special educational needs. All pupils have individual targets set in literacy and numeracy that identify what the next steps in learning for them will be. This is a positive feature, but individual targets are used too infrequently to support learning in lessons. There is more work to be done in refining planning and in linking this to assessment practice to ensure that lessons always build systematically on what has already been learnt. Marking is not used consistently to identify how pupils may improve their work and this is a missed opportunity in aiding successful learning.
23. Good emphasis has been given to meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress because of well-targeted support. They achieve well considering the low base from which many start. There is good teaching of pupils who learn English as an additional language, who benefit from the integrated programme of studies tailor-made to ensure any gaps in learning are covered and planned to suit an individual's assessed level of attainment. There is successful teaching in all years but the pace of learning in the middle of the school slows. On occasions the teachers' expectations of the amount and standard of work to be produced in a lesson is too low. Very effective teaching at the end of Key Stage 2 is giving rise to accelerated learning for all pupils, although in one class, behaviour management is not as positive as in the other. Some areas for improvement noted in the teaching at the time of the last inspection are still evident today. The school has not given sufficient focus to evaluating rigorously the quality of the teaching and learning through direct observation of work in classes. In a few classes and particularly in Year 6, pupils are given appropriate opportunities to manage elements of their own learning and this has a good impact on the progress they make and standards achieved. The school has yet to evaluate where the best learning takes place to enable more consistent practice to create the very best climate for learning.

24. Teaching is good overall and results in pupils learning effectively, and making good progress in most subjects by the time they leave at eleven years. The most consistently good teaching is in some classes at the beginning and at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils accelerate their learning in these years because of teachers' good subject knowledge, high expectations, and the brisk pace set in the lessons. The pupils have good opportunities given to pupils to manage appropriate aspects of lessons, and in so doing gain good self-knowledge that helps them strive for greater personal success. This was demonstrated well in an English lesson in Year 3 that focused on getting to know what prefixes were and how to use them. The teacher made the key objective of the lesson clear to pupils and set a brisk pace through a well-informed and interesting introduction that captured pupils' attention from the outset. Through skilful questioning, the teacher assessed what pupils remembered from an earlier lesson and very carefully scaffolded new learning by giving good examples and clear instructions that engaged pupils' thinking skills. Pupils were very keen to know about the roots of words and worked productively, finding out about the derivation and use of pre-fixes. By the end of the lesson, they knew that when 'mis' is put before a word it changes to an opposite meaning. They learned that 'ex', when used in 'exclaim', 'export', 'expel' for example, derives from Latin. All pupils were clear about what a pre-fix is and how to use one in their own speaking and writing.
25. Teaching was generally good in English, mathematics, science, religious education, art and geography lessons throughout the school. The sample of pupils' work showed good teaching and learning in these subjects too. The teaching observed in all other subjects is judged as satisfactory overall, although there were instances of good teaching in swimming and history in Year 6 and in design and technology in Year 4, leading to good progress within lessons for these pupils. The good quality of relationships in the school is successfully underpinning effective learning. Classrooms are happy places to be and this shows through in the enthusiasm shown by pupils and teachers alike. Teachers enjoy being with the pupils, and vice versa, and this shows.
26. Although the teaching is good there are points of practice that could be refined to make it even better. Most teachers know full well what they want pupils to achieve and most make clear the lesson objectives with pupils at the start of the lesson. This is a useful strategy but few go back to them at the end of the lesson to assess what exactly has been learned. In some lessons, objectives are vague and although they provide a benchmark for learning, they do not take sufficient account of what pupils have learned previously. This means that some pupils, especially higher attainers, are given work that lacks sufficient challenge. Few teachers record systematically who has learned what and how well in subjects other than English and mathematics. Written lesson plans in most foundation subjects are not always specific enough to ensure that pupils' learning is as well targeted as it could be. In the majority of lessons there is variable use of time targets to aid the pace of individuals' learning when the teacher's attention is elsewhere. In some marking the teacher sets clear goals for the pupils to aim for, but in others there is too much emphasis on effort expended at the expense of targeting improvements. This means that pupils' knowledge of their own learning is insufficiently developed. Homework is set appropriately and supported positively by parents who have signed up to the Home School agreement.

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

27. The quality and range of opportunities for learning, provided by the school are good. National strategies in literacy and numeracy have been implemented in school over the past two years and have had a good impact on improving the structure and content of the curriculum for basic skills. National schemes of work in many foundation subjects are beginning to have a beneficial effect on teaching and learning. All statutory curricular requirements are met. The curriculum is in much better shape than at the time of the previous inspection, though lesson planning is still ripe for further improvement. Strengths in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been maintained.

28. At the time of the school's previous inspection, not all aspects of the National Curriculum requirements for information technology were covered. There was also some imbalance in the provision for English and design and technology, with some aspects of work being covered more fully than others. Improvements have been made in all of these subjects. In information technology, although some aspects are not at present being covered in sufficient depth, work is provided in all areas; otherwise, statutory requirements are now met. In English and design and technology, suitable coverage is now provided in all aspects of the respective subjects. At the time of the last inspection, it was reported that there was little joint planning amongst staff, and inadequate provision was made in planning for pupils of differing abilities. Improvements have been made since that time. Teachers plan their work together, involving all members of staff, including those working with pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language, and in their planning most teachers usually provide a range of activities to suit all pupils. Lesson planning, however, lacks consistency. In some classes in the middle years, the learning objectives are not precise enough, especially in outlining the expected learning gains for different pupils. As a result, some potentially higher attaining pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
29. The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. The length of the school day is adequate, and the overall time allocations to individual subjects are satisfactory. In physical education, however, the balance of individual lessons sometimes limits the amount of time pupils have to practise and improve the skills being learnt.
30. Policies are in place for all subjects, and they are presently being updated in line with requirements of the National Curriculum. Schemes of work are also in place for all subjects, and effective long and medium-term planning ensures that all areas of work are covered. Both the literacy and numeracy strategies have been successfully implemented, and they are having a positive effect on raising standards. Opportunities are regularly provided across the range of curriculum subjects for pupils to further develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The school makes good provision for the pupils to have equal access to the whole curriculum, with teachers ensuring that pupils are involved thoroughly in lessons, and are provided with opportunities to join in extracurricular activities. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education. It is the school's policy not to teach sex education, but issues of drug and alcohol awareness are covered effectively within science lessons.
31. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to all of the curriculum, including extracurricular activities. As a result of careful planning, pupils have a curriculum matched to their needs. The school draws upon appropriate expertise from outside agencies, in order to meet the needs of pupils on the higher stages of the special educational need register, particularly for pupils holding statements.
32. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are provided with a very relevant curriculum that ensures they are given equality of opportunity to maximise their potential as learners.
33. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The daily assemblies meet the statutory requirements of an act of collective worship but are not used to best effect to promote opportunities for reflection and contemplation. For example, pupils are invited to think about a personal aspect that they wish to celebrate but then are not given time to do so. Assemblies fall short on promoting the school's values and are not planned to ensure specific learning points are made. In religious education lessons, pupils are introduced to the beliefs and values of other faiths and are taught successfully to respect them. The exploration of the meaning of the Millennium during a week in January 2000 enabled pupils to think about their hopes and wishes for the future. Pupils are given opportunities in some lessons to explore the beauty and wonder of the world around them, such as in a Year 3 art lesson when pupils were invited to consider the variety of foliage; however, across the school this aspect is not emphasised sufficiently well.

34. Good provision is made for pupils' moral development. The school's commitment to fostering relationships and respect for others makes an important contribution to the development of moral values. The values that distinguish right from wrong are taught through the framework of the behaviour policy and, at the beginning of each year, pupils discuss what standards they expect in their own class. Giving each pupil a laminated copy of the Code of Conduct when they join school is a good idea. Moral values are strongly emphasised in religious education lessons. There is some inconsistency in teachers' approach to discipline with not all praising positive actions rather than picking out those pupils not doing as they are told.
35. The quality of provision for social development is satisfactory. Pupils are given frequent and varied opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups to cater for diverse needs, opinions and abilities. The value of being part of a community, both within the school and the surrounding area, is emphasised throughout the school. Pupils are regularly given duties within their classroom; opportunities for wider responsibility are somewhat limited. The residential visit for older pupils is particularly valuable in providing experience of a social environment that is new to many pupils. The particular needs of certain groups of pupils are well addressed by activities such as the information technology club for older girls only, which enables them to learn away from the whole-class lessons in which boys can easily dominate.
36. The provision for cultural development is good. The school builds on the cultural strengths of its predominately Muslim population but also uses the faiths of its other pupils to show the richness and diversity of different traditions. The curriculum work, particularly in literacy, art, history and geography is reinforced by visits to museums and other places of educational interest, to develop an appreciation of local and world-wide cultures. Music is selected from across a wide range; for example, some Year 6 boys enthusiastically described a lesson in which they had to devise words to accompany a 'Rap' rhythm. A project on bread introduced pupils to the differing eating and cooking traditions of various countries.
37. The school provides a good range of extracurricular activities, including football, cricket, art, computers, quilling and choir. As many pupils are unable to remain after school, most of these clubs are provided at lunchtime, and pupils are encouraged to attend. The school welcomes many visitors, including the police, nurses, a dentist, fire officers and members from a range of local faith communities, as well as dance, drama and music groups. A wide range of educational visits is also arranged to places such as art galleries, the Black Country Museum, Blist's Hill and Moseley Old Hall. All these activities make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal, social and cultural development, and to their learning in subjects such as history and art.
38. The school has good links with the local community. It is very much part of that community, and the use of parent workshops is a particularly good initiative in this regard. The school makes good use of the local area in subjects such as geography, and the links that have been made with local businesses have benefited pupils' sporting activities particularly. Very good links have been forged with partner institutions. Pupils from both the infant and comprehensive schools are frequent visitors, joint training days have been held and educational resources have been shared. These very close ties have particularly benefited pupils with special educational needs, those learning English, and pupils of seven and eleven years of age, when they move from one school to another.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. Strengths in this aspect of the school's work have been maintained since the time of the previous inspection. The procedures for monitoring and supporting the pupils' welfare are effective. Teachers know their pupils well and are very responsive to their needs. There is comprehensive record keeping maintained for pupils with special educational needs and for those pupils learning English as an additional language. However there is insufficient systematic monitoring of individual progress to track that pupils are making the best gains in learning year on year. The use

made of the assessment of pupils' academic progress to guide curricular planning is unsatisfactory. The arrangements in place for child protection matters are effective though the school has no specific written policy, and this would be useful for adults working in school to have.

40. The school is a caring community in which there is evident concern for the welfare of the pupils. Teachers and classroom assistants are well aware of the personal needs of the pupils in their class and strive constantly to create a learning environment in which each pupil feels valued. This good level of care has a substantial effect on pupils' attainment and progress. Supervision in the playground is not always as vigilant as it should be; some boisterous play fighting was observed to go unchecked. Small groups of pupils are side-lined as ball games dominate the play space, which is a large spread of tarmac with no seating or quiet areas for those who would enjoy this type of recreation.
41. There is a good health and safety policy that is correctly applied in respect of pupils' personal health and the servicing of fire, portable electrical equipment and physical education equipment. Particularly noteworthy are the regular fire drills that are initiated by the senior caretaker without prior warning to anyone. Records show very good evacuation time if there were an incident. There are good procedures for first aid with a qualified first aider always on duty at playtimes and at lunchtime.
42. There are effective procedures for monitoring discipline and encouraging positive behaviour. Satisfactory behaviour and bullying policies are reinforced by a clear Code of Conduct, a laminated copy of which is given to each pupil. Each teacher and classroom assistant has a book in which any warnings about behaviour are noted. These entries are collated every day with a cumulative number of warnings leading to progressively severe sanctions. Pupils who do not receive any warnings for five consecutive weeks have their names on the weekly Roll of Honour displayed in the entrance hall.
43. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are excellent. Registers are returned to the office immediately after the morning registration and every absence is then investigated by a multi-lingual classroom assistant who contacts the parents, usually by telephone. Detailed records are kept of the absences of pupils who are away frequently or are taken on extended holidays and of attendance rates of classes and the whole school. Application forms are in use for holidays in term-time and efforts are made to persuade parents to encompass the school holidays in extended visits. The assistance of the leaders of the local community has been obtained in making parents aware of the importance of unbroken education. Pupils are very keen to win the individual and class prizes given for good attendance. These extensive procedures have resulted in a very great improvement in attendance since the last inspection.
44. There is no formal setting of targets for pupils' personal development but teachers monitor the progress of individuals very well through their daily diaries and other records such as certificates awarded.
45. The school has effective procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. There is little in the way of on-going assessment in the other core subjects of science, information technology and religious education or in foundation subjects. A useful start has been made in tracking the year-on-year performance of individuals and cohorts of pupils by the headteacher but there are limited tangible benefits yet to be seen in teachers' assessment practice. The results of the various testing undertaken through the year are analysed and are used to monitor and revise whole-school targets. Individual pupil's targets are set in English and mathematics and these are discussed with parents at the termly meetings but there is little use made of them to support learning in classrooms.
46. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is unsatisfactory. Teachers make insufficient use of the available data to guide their day-to-day planning. Lesson planning is

generally not reviewed in the light of what pupils have learnt in the previous lesson, which results in some pupils being insufficiently challenged.

47. Pupils with special educational needs are well cared for within the context of the provision for all pupils in the school. The extra dimension in care for special educational needs pupils is in the well-detailed tracking system that is in place and follows pupils throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to praise and value the support that they receive, as demonstrated by their good attitudes and behaviour.
48. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are well integrated into school. Between them, support staff speak most of the dialects spoken by the pupils and this has a beneficial impact on helping these pupils to feel safe, secure and confident to learn. Pupils with no English are welcomed into school and given one-to-one support until they have sufficient skills to join lessons with their classmates.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The school continues to maintain an effective partnership and has developed more strategies that encourage parents into school so that they see first hand the value of education to their children. Nineteen parents attended the pre-inspection meeting with the registered inspector and 13 per cent of questionnaires were returned. Almost all parents expressed support for what the school is doing; there were no major areas of concern. A large majority says that their children like coming to school and make good progress; that the school works closely with them, keeping them well informed about their children's progress and other school matters; that the teaching is good with high expectations of pupils' abilities; that the school promotes their family and cultural values and helps their children to become mature and responsible members of the community. Very significantly, as English is not the first language of most parents, all say that they are welcome in the school and feel comfortable about raising any questions or problems with the staff.
50. The quality of information provided for parents is good. Many letters are sent out in all the main languages spoken by the parents. This is an improvement on the last inspection. There are monthly newsletters, written in a clear, friendly style and much effort is put into ensuring that the most important information is understood by all. At the start of each year, parents are given a folder containing very good information on what is to be covered in English and mathematics by the year group, which aspects are to be targeted for their child and suggested activities which could be done at home to stimulate their child's learning. Also included in this folder is a useful sheet which details when physical education and swimming kit is needed and when homework is to be set and returned.
51. The prospectus is an attractive document but it fails to meet statutory requirements by the omission of the rates of absence. The last governors' annual report to parents was jointly prepared with the infant school. It omits the statutory requirements of including information on members of the governing body and targets for the results of testing at the end of Key Stage 2.
52. Parents are invited in each term, accompanied by their child, for a discussion with the class teacher that includes a review of the targets in English and mathematics. Some assistance with translation into their home language is available and is planned to be increased. Annual reports on pupils are satisfactory with brief but appropriate comments on each subject, which are expanded at the subsequent termly meeting with the class teacher.
53. The school makes efforts to develop a partnership with the parents of pupils with special educational needs by inviting them to reviews of Individual Education Plans. Few parents take up the opportunity to be involved mainly because of language difficulties. The school is actively exploring ways of developing a fuller partnership with these parents.

54. The involvement of parents with the school and with their children's work at home is satisfactory and improving. Parents have had the opportunity to comment on drafts of policies such as the revised aims of the school and homework. The Home School agreement was devised in conjunction with parents and has their strong support. The taking home of reading books is not consistent and there is no reading record book for comments by parents.
55. The provision of workshops for parents is an excellent initiative. They enable the parents not only to improve their learning but also to assist their children in their work at home. So far there have been workshops in literacy and numeracy. The school hopes that some parents will feel confident to work as classroom volunteers following the success of the workshops.
56. Strenuous and persistent efforts by the school have resulted in more parents becoming aware of the need to reduce any disruption to their children's education, particularly by long family visits to the Indian sub-continent. The arrangement of such visits to coincide with the school's summer holidays has had a marked impact on the progress of the children. Many parents have reacted well to the school's procedure of telephoning daily to ascertain a reason for the absence of their child and now advise the school early in the morning if there is a justifiable cause.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The previous inspection judged leadership and management to be good overall. The same is true today. Leadership is good and there is drive and determination on the part of all staff and governors to raise standards. There are shortcomings however in management, because of the lack of rigorous procedures in place to enable those responsible to undertake systematic evaluation of the school's performance.
58. In 1996 six key issues were identified for future action:
- Raise standards of attainment by all pupils, particularly in English and mathematics by more effective short-term planning which clearly identifies what children need to know and the best way of taking learning forward for individuals or groups.
 - Provide subject training for teachers to help them assess pupils' attainment more systematically and to make better use of assessment in their planning.
 - Monitor more closely the progress of those pupils returning to school following extended leave of absence and improve the support they receive.
 - Ensure a more consistent approach to the teaching of information technology: ensure the National Curriculum is covered in full.
 - Make better use of the information gathered through monitoring the work in classes to evaluate developments and the cost effectiveness of decisions.
 - Widen the range of languages used in communication with parents so they might be better informed of the work of the school and their child's involvement.
59. The school has tackled most of the above issues through well targeted action that is resulting in steadily rising standards. Teaching has improved significantly because of a good programme of staff development. The appointment of effective, newly qualified teachers who have been given good support by the deputy headteacher as mentor, has added to the quality of teaching in the school. School development planning has moved ahead since the previous inspection, though it is difficult to see why some targets are prioritised sooner than others; writing is a prime example as it is scheduled for the autumn when clearly it needs attention now. Assessment practice requires more work and short-term planning is not yet at the point where it is sufficiently detailed to ensure that all pupils will gain the most benefit possible from each lesson. Good procedures are now in place for helping pupils who have been absent from school settle into routines and get back to work at the right level. A new information technology suite has been established with good resources that are being developed further. The curriculum for information technology includes all

aspects of the subject but some are not covered in sufficient depth and standards of achievement are below the level expected for eleven-year-olds. Very good attention has been given to widening the use of community languages in communication with parents. The school has made excellent progress in monitoring and promoting improved attendance. Palfrey Junior School is clearly an improving school.

60. The headteacher was absent during the week of inspection, but it is evident that she gives good leadership to the school. The impact of this is apparent in the many strengths of the school and demonstrated by the confident and united way that staff undertook their roles and responsibilities in her absence. The headteacher of the adjacent infant school led the school capably during the inspection week, and ensured that the school was able to show its strengths.
61. The headteacher gives good direction to the work of the school and is striving to develop the staff and governors as a team focused on the chief priority of continued improvements in standards. Individually, all staff and the governors are committed to raising standards and it is very much due to the hard work of all staff that improvement in attainment, teaching and learning is evident. Teachers play a satisfactory role in determining what priorities should be pursued but have played a limited role in monitoring the quality of education in the school that results. Most know what is planned by colleagues but not what actually happens in classes other than their own. The headteacher, with some external input from the Local Education Authority, has undertaken monitoring of teaching but not in any planned or systematic way and with little recorded evaluation. In discussion it is clear she knows the strengths and weaknesses well. The senior management team has not yet been active in supporting the school's evaluation of its performance. There are too few rigorous and formal systems in place to identify what is working best in school and why. The best practice in the school in moving pupils' learning forward to give boost to standards has not yet been sufficiently promoted. School managers know and understand these shortcomings, and there is steadfast resolve to put them right.
62. Co-ordinators work determinedly to manage their subjects and aspects. They have had good success in boosting the level of resources and have made useful contributions to the improvement of the curriculum. Their job descriptions have been revised in the light of the ongoing appraisal cycle and all teachers now have identified management roles and responsibilities. Most co-ordinators do not, however, have many opportunities to monitor teaching, the curriculum and standards directly, in order to identify what is working well and what requires improvement. Because of this, managers have only imperfect knowledge of what is happening in school and do not always know, for example, whether policy and practice are consistent in each class. Literacy and numeracy are the exception and there has been wider involvement of teachers in assessing how successful their work is in terms of its impact on learning. Co-ordinators are keen to take on a widened role in school management and there is every indication that they would be successful in their new tasks.
63. The management of pupils with special educational needs is very effective and results in good quality provision for these pupils. The co-ordinator who is quite new to post is committed and hard working and has good insights into what improvements are needed. She has ensured that colleagues are well informed about Individual Education Plans and has provided good quality training to ensure that effective teaching and support are given to the pupils. The result of this good management and leadership is the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs.
64. The management of the provision made for pupils learning English as an additional language is good. A team of three teachers works effectively alongside class teachers in dovetailing individual programmes of work so that pupils receive a tailor-made curriculum that supports their particular needs. Once an individual pupil's learning is assessed at a similar level to others, groups are organised for targeted basic skills support. This ensures resources are used very effectively and good value for money ensues. Additional work with groups of parents through classes in school

and home visits is proving very successful in raising the value of education within the community. This can be seen working to good advantage in the rising attendance rate.

65. A number of governors have only recently joined the governing body, but they have made a sound start in getting to grips with the core priorities of the school and undertaking training to gain deeper understanding of the job they have taken on. The chair of governors visits the school regularly and a number of other governors also have cause to be in school quite often. Governors have growing knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and they are starting to give firm support to the headteacher and key managers in shaping the direction to be taken. They are still very much reliant on the headteacher to provide the information they need and are not yet the 'critical friends' that the role demands. The monitoring of the curriculum is one of the aspects of governors' work that will need development. On the whole, the governing body oversees that statutory requirements are met and that the necessary information for parents is made available as required. There are one or two minor omissions from the prospectus and governors' annual report that require attention.
66. Matters relating to finance are dealt with efficiently and effectively. Financial planning is sound; additional money to support pupils with special educational needs and that provided for additional literacy groups and the booster classes in Year 6 is put to good use. Day-to-day financial administration is good. The school is increasing its use of new technology, not only in lessons, but also to support the work of managers and administrators. The use of computers to maintain and update essential records, financial information and assessment data is satisfactory overall.
67. The school has a good number of qualified teachers and support staff for the number of pupils and demands of the curriculum. The open-plan nature of the school, though conducive to effective teaching and learning, results in noise transferring from one class to the next, occasionally causing disturbance. The buildings are very well maintained and kept in spotless condition. Outdoor play-space does not offer the same quality environment as indoor space does and is in need of enhancement. There are enough learning resources for each subject, though the library would benefit from relocation and a wider range of materials. Because all forms of resources are put to effective use, teaching and learning benefit.
68. On the whole, the school meets its aims and promotes its values well. Parents hold very positive views about the school's leadership. Governors uphold the principles of Best Value competently in their financial decision-making. Standards have risen steadily over the past few years and the school is on track to meet its targets for achievement both this year and in the coming years. The school works as a caring and happy place of learning. Currently more is spent than most primary schools in providing a good quality of education that enables pupils to leave school much better equipped than when they started. At the present, school evaluation is not as good as it could be. This is the chief limitation of management. Even though standards are below average, because value is unquestionably added to pupils' learning and there is good capacity in school to sustain improvement, the school is judged to provide good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- **Continue to raise standards in English, mathematics and science by setting out a clear plan that prioritises what action is needed to have the best impact on boosting results.** (Paragraphs 1, 6, 7, 8, 14, 28, 71, 73, 74, 80, 89, 123)
- **Raise attainment in information technology by providing more opportunities for pupils to use information technology, particularly to support learning across the curriculum.** (Paragraphs 1, 9, 14, 21, 28, 59, 95, 127, 128, 130)
- **Involve key staff in establishing and implementing a systematic and rigorous monitoring system that will:**

- a. Identify, evaluate and share the best teaching and learning in the school;
 - b. Enable senior managers to have reliable information on which to target subject and whole-school improvement;
 - c. Ensure information gathered and analyses of findings are used to check that the projected school targets are on schedule to be met or exceeded. (Paragraphs 3, 23, 57, 59, 61, 62, 68, 86, 87, 97, 111, 117, 118, 125, 133, 146)
- **Improve the consistency of lesson planning and use of assessment to:**
 - a. ensure that all lesson plans have clear and detailed objectives for the range of pupils in the class;
 - b. set clear targets for pupils and clear outcomes for lessons based on accurate assessment of what pupils have already achieved;
 - c. ensure that marking not only recognises effort but shows pupils clearly how work may be improved;
 - d. review regularly the quality and impact of planning and assessment through systematic monitoring. (Paragraphs 22, 23, 26, 28, 39, 45, 46, 59, 71, 78, 83, 85, 86, 94, 103, 110, 116, 118, 122, 124, 132, 133, 145)

Additional aspects the school should consider in preparing its action plan:

- ◇ Re-locating and extending the range of materials available in the school library to make it more accessible as a resource base for learning. (Paragraphs 67, 75)
- ◇ Making the playground more user-friendly. (Paragraphs 17, 67)
- ◇ Ensuring all statutory requirements are met in the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents. (Paragraphs 51, 65)
- ◇ Widening the opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. (Paragraph 34)
- ◇ Giving pupils more opportunities to develop personal and social skills and to take greater responsibility for appropriate aspects of their own learning. (Paragraphs 19, 26, 131)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	97
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	5	55	40	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

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	276
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	102

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	97

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	263

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.7
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 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	32	27	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	14	15
	Girls	12	9	9
	Total	24	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	41 (44)	39 (13)	41 (25)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	14	11
	Girls	6	12	6
	Total	16	26	17
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	27 (31)	44 (24)	29 (30)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	56
Pakistani	116
Bangladeshi	89
Chinese	0
White	10
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	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: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.9
Average class size	27.6

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	114

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
	£
Total income	522600
Total expenditure	500654
Expenditure per pupil	1801
Balance brought forward from previous year	16599
Balance carried forward to next year	38545

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	276
Number of questionnaires returned	36

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	78	17	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	22	0	6	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	33	6	6	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	44	11	3	3
The teaching is good.	67	31	3	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	61	33	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	33	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	86	11	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	50	44	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	53	31	3	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	42	0	6	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	36	6	8	11

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

ENGLISH

69. At the time of the previous inspection in 1996, standards in English were judged to be below average and were a key issue for the school to address. Writing was identified as a particular weakness. It was recognised that many of the school's pupils joined it with low levels of English. Test results in the same year showed standards to be well below average and they have remained as such in the intervening years.
70. Results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests when compared to all schools were well below average. Weakness in writing continues as the area of English showing least improvement in the school's performance. When compared to similar schools, those with roughly the same proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, results are below average. Results are unable to be compared with schools that have a similar percentage of pupils who come from homes where English is not the first spoken language. The trend in English results in the school as demonstrated by average point scores is gently rising, and is a positive picture, particularly as pupils still enter school with low levels of English and are sometimes held back in learning by extended absences from school.
71. The inspection evidence from work in classrooms suggests improved standards in English since the last inspection. Nevertheless they remain at a below average level and are in need of boosting. The literacy hour has had a very positive impact on giving structure to both teaching and learning. Writing remains a weakness and is a key area for priority action by the school. The inspection did not reveal any significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The majority of pupils make good progress in English language and literacy skills during their time at school, although in some years and in some classes, the rate of learning is faster and more consolidated. Good teaching of English leads to effective learning for most pupils, although more attention could usefully be directed at ensuring potentially higher-attaining pupils are given hard enough work to do.
72. Attainment in speaking and listening is below average. Pupils enter school with well below average skills in language and literacy and teachers and support staff work hard at developing these skills. The pupils who stay in school for a regular period of time benefit from the opportunities that they are able to take to improve their speaking and listening skills. There is a significant number of pupils who are taken away from school for extended periods of time and who need extra support on their return to get back to an appropriate standard of skill in speaking and listening to English again. Pupils enter into discussions as part of the literacy hour lessons and this gives them appropriate support in developing their speaking and listening skills if they have been in school for a continuous period of time. Those pupils who are having to get used to using English again are well supported in small withdrawal groups as far as developing speaking and listening skills are concerned.
73. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has also had a beneficial effect upon the reading standards even though they remain below average. The introduction of the strategy has further raised the status of reading but there is currently insufficient attention paid to hearing pupils read individually on a regular basis. The best readers are beginning to read with reasonable accuracy but still lack understanding of some of the more difficult words in books that are suitable for their reading needs. The less able readers are still at a stage where they lack confidence and need to be prompted in order to read with any measure of skill. They do not have ideas about using picture clues to help them with their reading. They have not fully developed their ability to break words down. The word attack skills of a significant minority of average-attaining pupils are also underdeveloped. The emphasis given to this type of text work in the opening session to

literacy hours is enabling the school to focus more on phonic skills but even more attention could usefully be given to developing this key skill in reading.

74. Attainment in writing is well below average. The skills developed in reading are not yet being transferred to developing writing skills. Pupils are beginning to write in various forms, including some poetry. Again the literacy strategy is giving support in this respect. Pupils do not have enough consistent opportunity to write for sufficiently long periods of time that would help them to develop wider writing skills. The lack of consistency shows through more in Year 5 where writing in pupils' notebooks is not as creative or extended as in other years in school and it is apparent that fewer opportunities to write for different purposes have been given to them. Handwriting and presentation skills are not given enough attention although the pupils are joining letters and using pens from the earliest stage. As a result of lack of attention to skills there is some unsatisfactory letter formation by some pupils throughout the year groups.
75. There is little opportunity for pupils to develop research skills effectively. The library is not well located for pupils to have good access throughout the school day. The knowledge that pupils have of library skills is based on the limited opportunities that they get to use the school library as a resource after school or from libraries outside school. Lack of support in this area means that the pupils' skills in reading are not as well developed as those in their writing.
76. Taking account of all of the difficulties, the great majority of pupils make good progress over time. They are all benefiting from the good levels of support that is an integral part of all English lessons, including those pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English. The provision of additional support for all pupils is helping to raise standards and improve progress in the acquisition of basic skills. This is particularly so in the withdrawal groups where the work programme is matched closely to the needs of pupils. Good attention has been given to dovetailing programmes of additional literacy sessions for target groups of pupils who have language and special educational needs. Booster classes for Year 6 pupils have prepared them well for national tests this year; the emphasis on how questions are phrased has given them confidence to access test questions more easily.
77. Most pupils have positive attitudes to English. They are interested in the tasks that stretch their imagination. They are becoming increasingly confident about making contributions to class discussions once they have overcome their inability to speak in clear and accurate English. Their ability to do so varies considerably from class to class, reflecting the difference in the range of opportunities they are given. Nevertheless the pupils' attitudes are good because in the main they listen to one another carefully and respond positively to adults who are giving them good support. Pupils generally try to do their best in their work as a result of the good relationships that are in evidence in all classes.
78. The quality of the teaching is good across the key stage overall with the best teaching taking place in Year 3, 4 and 6. There is sometimes a lack of impetus at Year 5 where there is a lack of focus on clear objectives for learning. Where teaching is best, there is a significant amount of support given to pupils by teachers, support staff and classroom assistants. The best lessons are planned carefully with teachers having secure subject knowledge. The literacy strategy has increased the teachers' expertise in the teaching of English and made them more confident in their presentation of the work. Lessons are introduced interestingly and tasks are well matched to pupils needs. Lessons move along at a good pace but not at the cost of ensuring understanding. The very best lessons are well organised and managed. They are well resourced with particular attention paid to supporting pupils with special needs and those whose first language is not English with visual images that are helping their understanding. Marking is completed regularly and often gives praise for work well done. However, there is very little indication given about what pupils could do to improve their work as they move on in their learning. As a result of the good implementation of the literacy strategy, assessment of work in English is being developed appropriately.

79. The co-ordinator provides good support for other teachers. The policy and scheme of work are being well supplemented by the National Literacy Strategy programme. Results of National Curriculum test papers are analysed by the assessment co-ordinator and information shared about what needs to be done in order to raise standards in English. Homework is being given on a regular basis in most classes, but there is still some inconsistency in the way it is being used in order to improve standards. The school has a will to improve standards in English and is well placed to do so.

MATHEMATICS

80. In the 1996 inspection report, standards in mathematics were judged to be below average. Nevertheless, teaching was satisfactory and progress was at the expected rate, though the highest and lowest-attaining pupils were not well catered for. The pupils responded well to the opportunities for learning. There were a number of other shortcomings including over-reliance on the textbook and the inadequate use of mathematics across the curriculum. The school has made good improvement since that time, as the following report shows, but there remain things to do.
81. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, standards in mathematics were well below both the average found in all schools and those achieved in schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Over the last three years, standards have remained at comparatively low levels, though they have improved overall at the rate found nationally, with significant improvement in 1999. There has not been any significant difference in national tests between boys and girls in mathematics since 1996, though boys tend to do a little better than girls in these tests.
82. The school has set achievable targets for attainment for this and future years. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards across the wide spectrum of mathematics are below average by the end of the key stage. In some lessons and from the scrutiny of work, it is clear that pupils attain the expected level. This is especially so in the mechanical aspects of the subject. Where pupils are required to think, talk, investigate and communicate mathematics, they are less successful, as language difficulties hamper their best efforts. The high proportion of pupils with English as an additional language impacts profoundly on standards in mathematics. In addition, the proportion with special educational needs adversely affects the attainment profile in school.
83. The social, language and academic backgrounds of pupils are not allowed to stand in the way of success. All staff are determined that pupils should achieve well and they work hard to ensure this. Over time, pupils make good progress. Those with English as an additional language make steady gains in knowledge, skills and understanding, but this is often at a comparatively slow rate. These pupils, and those with special educational needs, are supported well in lessons and the system of setting for mathematics works very much to the advantage of the different attainment groups. The school has eliminated the problems of poorly matched work to the needs of higher and lower-achieving pupils identified in the last report. There is now good challenge in the work for most pupils, although in some groups more demanding work could be set for potentially higher-achieving pupils. Good teaching of basic skills within numeracy hours is no doubt having a beneficial effect on standards. Indeed, standards in numeracy are strongest overall and not far short of the expected level. Greater speed would give the lift required to bring them into line.
84. Pupils are interested in their work and they try hard. On the whole, concentration, independence, responsibility and enjoyment are found in equal measure. Occasionally, some of the older boys seek attention by minor misdemeanour, but generally, mathematics lessons are times of good effort and behaviour and a sense of purpose.
85. Good teaching is evident in mathematics. Sometimes the pace of work slips, learning objectives are not sharp enough and the marking does not pick up on ways to improve the work. Most of the time, however, teachers teach with determination, confidence, good subject knowledge and high expectations. There are some innovative teaching methods that bring great success. In a Year 3

lesson on position and co-ordinates, the pupils were transported in thought to a remote island where they made valiant attempts to locate buried treasure. Many really believed the teacher had met a pirate in the local branch of Morrisons supermarket and were equally determined to find the treasure so that she was rewarded for the money she lent Black Jake to pay for his groceries. They looked forward to the next time they were in Morrisons, to check which leg was the wooden one!

86. Leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory. At present there is no permanent co-ordinator of the subject, but the caretaker co-ordinator has kept things moving in mathematics. Some direct monitoring of mathematics has taken place though the co-ordinator has had little involvement in this. Moves to introduce target setting and sharing with pupils in lessons have been successful, though more consistency is required in this practice and only rarely are these targets reviewed at the end of the lesson. Assessment in mathematics is good and teachers have enough information of good quality to ensure that such targets are logical, appropriate and effective in promoting improved attainment. The co-ordinator has ensured that the curriculum is well balanced and that all pupils have the appropriate opportunity to learn mathematics at an appropriate level. The textbook is no longer dominant in mathematics lessons because staff development has equipped teachers with better subject knowledge and has enabled them to relate teaching styles and methods much more closely to their pupils' needs.
87. Pupils get a good deal from their mathematics, in both senses of the phrase. They build skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate, regardless of background, and standards are on the move. Target setting, monitoring and evaluation are the keys to continuing success. There is every indication that the staff will continue to improve mathematics education and standards.

SCIENCE

88. At the time of the last inspection, standards were said to be below average, although the 1997 National Curriculum tests undertaken by Year 6 pupils, show that standards were well below average. No judgement was provided on pupils' progress, but teaching was said to be at least satisfactory in all lessons. Current inspection findings show that, whilst standards are still below average, they have improved since that time. The progress made by the current Year 6 pupils is good.
89. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the school's overall results were in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally, and, in comparison with similar schools, the results were well below average. The results in 1999, however, show some improvement over the previous two years. Since that time, the school has made strenuous efforts to raise standards in science. However, standards are still below average and must remain a key area for the school to improve still further.
90. The co-ordinator has undertaken a detailed analysis of the test results, to identify areas for improvement; the school's scheme of work has been rigorously applied and new resources have been purchased to support the work. In particular, the school has identified the limited language skills of many pupils, as a major cause of low results in tests, and has embarked on a concerted effort to increase pupils' understanding of scientific vocabulary. Further, with the co-ordinator teaching in Year 6, with pupils being placed in sets for lessons and with good assessment procedures being in place, the school has been in a good position to raise the standard of pupils' work. As a result, in comparison to the school's results in 1999, the standards currently being achieved by pupils in Year 6 show that a very significant improvement has taken place.
91. At the end of Key Stage 2, in Year 6, most pupils are confident in explaining many of the life-processes of humans, including the functions of the heart, the circulation of the blood, and they can discuss the importance of the skeleton. Pupils know that tobacco, alcohol and drugs can have harmful effects. They can name the various parts of a flower, and most can identify the importance, for example, of the different methods of seed dispersal. Pupils in Year 5 explain

clearly how a plant is fertilised. Pupils in Year 3 confidently discuss the meaning of predator and prey. Older pupils explain clearly what constitutes a food chain.

92. Pupils in Year 4 know that some materials are soluble and others are insoluble. They know that materials can be made into mixtures, and that they can be separated through processes such as evaporation and filtering. In Year 6 most pupils successfully name a variety of materials, they describe their various properties, and they can explain the differences between solids, liquids and gases. They describe some of the changes that take place when materials are heated or cooled, and most know that some changes are reversible and some are not. Pupils in Year 6 know that a complete circuit is needed to make electrical devices work, and that circuits can be controlled by a switch. A minority of pupils know that objects have weight because of the gravitational pull of the Earth, and that friction and air resistance are forces that slow moving objects, but many pupils have difficulty explaining these concepts. In their studies on light, most pupils explain clearly that shadows are caused by an object blocking the light. They know that sound is caused by an object vibrating. Pupils successfully carry out a range of experiments, and whilst many pupils successfully explain their work, understanding and using the correct scientific language, a minority still find this aspect of the work difficult. Whilst many pupils show an understanding of science work in discussion, a significant number find difficulty in reading questions clearly, and in providing written answers accurately.
93. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are consistently good. They listen carefully to their teachers, and whilst a very small number of pupils occasionally call out answers, the majority wait to be asked to offer their contributions. Pupils find the subject interesting, they work well with partners and in groups, and they particularly enjoy the practical activities provided. This enables them to concentrate on completing the tasks set, and as a result most pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding. Many pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language find the language content of the subject difficult, but they behave well and work hard, and manage to make satisfactory progress in their work. Most pupils take great care with the presentation of their work.
94. The quality of teaching is good, and in a lesson seen in Year 3 it was very good. Lessons are generally well planned, although lesson objectives are occasionally not precise enough, in relation to the needs of different pupils. Teachers throughout the school make particularly good use of practical activities. They are also very careful to use, and emphasise, the correct scientific terminology, being fully aware that this is a particular area for development with pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and, although introductions to lessons are occasionally rather long, they usually provide clear instructions and explanations, being particularly careful to help and support pupils who have English as an additional language. Relationships are also good, and all these factors help pupils to make appropriate progress. Where teaching is very good, teachers subject knowledge is very secure, very appropriate resources are used and the lesson moves at a very brisk pace. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work, but not all staff add helpful and supportive comments.
95. The school uses the Quality and Curriculum Authority document as its scheme of work, and all aspects of work are well covered. It makes particularly good use of practical activities to support pupils' learning. Good use is also made of the school grounds, to develop the study of, for example, plants and animals. The use of a live barn owl, in Year 3, was also a most effective way of gaining pupils' attention, and reinforcing their knowledge of predators. Practical activities offer some support to pupils' spiritual development, when they learn about the wonders of science, and discussions on the harmful effects of alcohol and tobacco enhance pupils' moral development. The various written activities undertaken provide support for the school's initiative in literacy. At present, however, science provides few opportunities for the development of pupils' computer skills.

96. Good assessment procedures are in place, with pupils taking tests at the end of each topic. Teachers record the information carefully, and this enables them to check pupils' current attainment, and also their progress. This information is also used effectively to plan appropriate future work, to suit the needs of all the pupils. It is a very positive feature in helping standards in science lift.
97. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable about the subject. She prepares half-termly plans for her colleagues, and monitors samples of books, to check the work that is being covered. At present, she has no opportunity to observe lessons taking place. She has recently provided particularly clear guidance for other teachers, through having identified weaknesses in pupils' performances in national tests, and proposed a remedial course of action. The school has made very significant improvements in its standards as a result, and evidence would suggest that it has clear capacity to continue this improvement in the future.

ART

98. At the time of the school's previous inspection, standards were reported to be in line with the national expectations, with pupils making good progress. Teaching was reported to be either good or very good. Current inspection findings show that standards are higher than expected for pupils of the same age, and that standards have, therefore, improved. Pupils continue to make good progress.
99. At Key Stage 2, pupils use pencils, pastels and paint most effectively, in producing a variety of art work. They understand how to achieve the shades they require for their paintings, and they confidently mix their own colours. Pupils in Year 3, for example, successfully produce paintings of 'hot and cold' colours, using an appropriate range of paint. Pupils throughout the school produce a wide range of finely detailed pencil sketches, producing effective variety in line and tone. In Years 4 and 5, for instance, pupils have produced detailed sketches of animals and flowers. Pupils confidently produce artefacts in three dimensions, such as the clay snails and mini-beasts made in Year 3. Pupils have studied art work from other cultures, and, for example, pupils in Year 4 have produced native masks out of papier-mache. Pupils have studied the work of a number of famous artists, and in Year 4 have produced work in the style of Holbein, whilst those in Years 5 and 6 have produced most effective work reflecting that of Picasso. Art is used successfully to support work in other subjects, notably history, and pupils in many classes have drawn effective and detailed pencil sketches, such as those of Victorian artefacts in Year 6. Pupils throughout the school are able to reflect on their work, and comment on how it might be improved.
100. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good, and occasionally very good. They listen carefully to their teachers, they know what they are required to do, and they concentrate well on their tasks. They are keen to produce and complete work of a high standard. Above all they work with a sense of fun and enjoyment, and this helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, to make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of a range of art skills. They are nearly always well behaved, and readily share resources and ideas with other pupils.
101. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and well resourced; the pupils are provided with a range of items to observe and copy, and appropriate materials with which to work. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and provide pupils with clear explanations and advice on how to improve their work. Occasionally, a small number of pupils become restless and inattentive, but usually they are well managed, and this allows them to concentrate on their work, and develop the required skills. Teachers take pleasure in producing displays of pupils' work, which greatly enhances the learning environment.
102. The school intends to adopt the Quality and Curriculum Authority document as its scheme of work, having previously used a scheme of its own. All aspects of work are appropriately covered,

with the school laying particular emphasis on observational drawing. There is an active art club, and during the inspection pupils were busy developing their own work in the style of Guiseppe Arcimboldo. Visits have been arranged to art galleries, to further enrich the curriculum for pupils. Through the study of famous artists and the art work of other cultures, the subject provides effective support for pupils' cultural development.

103. No formal assessment is undertaken in art. Some information is gathered in lessons, but little is recorded, and, therefore, the information available is inadequate either to accurately assess pupils' current standards, or to help plan future work.
104. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, and with the new scheme to be introduced, she has also drawn up an action plan for the development of the subject. She produces half-termly plans for her colleagues, and, although she keeps photographic evidence of some of the work done, she has no opportunity to observe lessons taking place. The fact that standards in the subject have improved, and a new scheme is now in place, suggests that the capacity exists for the subject to improve still further in the future.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105. At the time of the school's previous inspection, standards were reported to be below those expected, and pupils were said to be better at making than designing. Although no judgement was made on teaching, it was said that lessons were poorly planned. Current inspection findings show that improvements have been made in all areas. Standards are now similar to those expected nationally, for pupils of the same age, they undertake appropriate amounts of designing, before starting to make items, and lesson planning is now satisfactory. Pupils' progress is satisfactory.
106. At Key Stage 2, pupils successfully clarify their ideas for making a product, through class and group discussion. They then successfully draw up appropriate plans and designs, in some cases, such as when pupils in Year 5 made slippers, first disassembling commercially produced items to help them identify the components they want. Pupils also confidently list the various items they need to help them complete their task. Having produced their plans, pupils choose from a range of materials, such as paper, card, felt, wood and food items, and suitable tools, such as knives, scissors and hammers, to help them make their product. They successfully measure, cut and shape the materials, and join them with items such as glue, velcro and nails. Pupils provide appropriate finishing techniques, such as painting, where required, and they confidently evaluate their work, both as they proceed, and when they have finished. Pupils in Year 3, for example, have successfully designed and made models of playground equipment, as well as sandwiches, which were produced with a variety of bread and a range of fillings. Pupils in Year 4 have planned and made their own purses and wallets, using various fastening techniques, and completing their work with their own individual motifs. Pupils in Year 5 have made their own slippers and a variety of bread rolls, and pupils in Year 6 have planned and assembled wooden bird-boxes.
107. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are usually good. They generally listen well to instructions, although very occasionally a small number of pupils are inattentive. They are interested in the work, and they are particularly enthusiastic about the practical nature of the activities. They co-operate well with other pupils during discussion and planning sessions, and they concentrate well on the tasks set. This enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, to make satisfactory gains in both their designing and making skills. Above all, pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to succeed and this helps them work hard and to make progress.
108. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and in one lesson seen in Year 4 it was good. Lessons are well planned, and much improvement has been made since the time of the last inspection. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge, and provide clear instructions, together with a suitable range of resources, to support pupils with their work, and help them make progress. Good

demonstrations are provided for pupils, such as that provided in Year 4 on how to make purses and wallets. The organisation of the making activities is generally good, with much help and encouragement provided. Occasionally, a small number of pupils are not kept on task, and this affects the speed at which they complete their work. Where teaching is good, objectives are clearly outlined, and achievable targets are set for individual pupils.

109. The school uses the Quality and Curriculum Authority document as its scheme of work. All appropriate aspects of work are now covered, including satisfactory amounts of design work, which is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. The written work undertaken, both in planning and evaluating work, gives support to the school's initiative in literacy. The counting and measuring activities, undertaken in various aspects of work, help enhance pupils' understanding of numeracy.
110. Assessment is undertaken informally in class, but there is no agreed policy, and practice is inconsistent through the school. Nothing is recorded systematically, and, therefore, there is little information that can be used to either assess pupils' current attainment or to help plan appropriate future work for pupils.
111. The co-ordinator is a newly qualified teacher who will not take the subject over formally until September. She is keen, however, and has drawn up a suitable action plan for developing the subject. The fact that the school has improved its standards in design and technology since the time of the last inspection, as well as a suitable action plan having been drawn up, shows that it has the capacity to develop the subject still further.

GEOGRAPHY

112. The last inspection report judged that standards and the quality of teaching in geography were satisfactory although rates of progress were very variable. The school has made good improvements to the subject and, in general, geography is taught consistently well across the school and pupils develop skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate.
113. The scrutiny of pupils' work in all classes across the whole school year shows clearly that pupils are attaining the expected level of skill and knowledge in geography. This judgement is supported firmly by the few lesson observations it was possible to make. Pupils in Year 3 develop satisfactory knowledge about their home area and places nearby. Some high quality work is completed in the study of land use in the streets around the school, for example. In later years, knowledge and understanding is extended by the study of other places in Britain, Europe and then the world, especially in the Indian sub continent. Strong links are made to religious education in this work, and pupils are able to make careful comparison of life in Palfrey with life in India. They show their understanding in lessons by the way they answer questions, though a large proportion of pupils have difficulty in setting their ideas out on paper as they lack the vocabulary to represent their knowledge and understanding in the written word.
114. There is a strong moral dimension to the work in geography. In their study of rainforests, for example, Year 5 pupils consider how these are threatened by human actions and how they must be protected. The oldest pupils have sound knowledge of how humans influence the location, development and growth of settlements and they can locate the chief places on maps of Britain, Europe and the World.
115. Pupils work well in geography, they put in good effort and produce good amounts of well presented work. In the normal geography lesson, pupils are keen to answer questions, they listen carefully and behave well. Some pupils have difficulties in responding to questions because English is not their home language, but all try hard when asked and there is a good sense of interest, enjoyment and enthusiasm in many lessons. Inspectors saw geography lessons in Years 3 and 5 that showed these good qualities of effort and motivation. Pupils in one Year 3 class, for

example were enjoying 'sending' post cards from different places in Europe to tell of the weather and the sights. They could identify why they would like to visit the Greek or Canary Islands and they put in good effort to complete the work in the time available.

116. The teaching of geography is good. Although just three lessons were seen during the inspection, teaching quality stands up well against the scrutiny of pupils' work. It is evident from all sources, that teachers have good subject knowledge, high expectations, good management of pupils and that they use a good range of methods. Objectives in planning could be more sharply focused and the use of these to set and share targets for pupils in lessons could be more consistent. Marking could also be utilised more effectively to show pupils how to improve their work.
117. Leadership and management of geography are good, the co-ordinator is well organised, has built the resources well and has provided good quality documentary support for the staff. She does not have the opportunity to monitor standards, the curriculum and teaching directly, though she works hard to keep herself informed of what is happening throughout the school.
118. On the whole, the school is in a good position to develop the geography programme of work to meet the demands of Curriculum 2000 when it is introduced. One aspect, however, requires improvement. This is assessment practice, which is ad hoc and inconsistent. There is insufficient information gathered about individual progress to enable teachers to focus their work on what knowledge and skills need strengthening as pupils move through the school.

HISTORY

119. At the time of the school's previous inspection, standards were reported to be below average, although pupils' progress and the quality of teaching were reported to be generally satisfactory. Current inspection findings show the standards are now similar to those expected for pupils of the same age, and that they have improved since the time of the last inspection. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress.
120. At Key Stage 2, pupils know about an appropriate range of historical periods. Pupils in Year 3 can discuss confidently aspects of the Roman period of British history, such as the main towns, the routine involved in visiting the baths and the revolt led by Boudicca. Pupils in Year 4 can describe living conditions at the time of the Tudors, showing particular interest in the differences in homes and clothing between rich and poor people. In Year 5, they can describe life in Ancient Egypt, confidently pointing out, for example, the importance of the River Nile, and the role played by archeologists in investigating such places as the Tomb of Nebamun. Pupils in Year 6 can explain aspects of life in Victorian England, such as conditions in schools, and they can discuss confidently the effects that the Second World War had on the lives of ordinary people, such as evacuation and rationing. In discussing these periods, pupils are confident in explaining some of the differences that distinguish them. They also show some confidence in using dates and date-lines, to place people and events in a proper chronological framework. Pupils in Year 6 show some independence in their work, and they have undertaken research work, for example, on Victorian Census figures. The lack of provision for independent research was a weakness identified during the last inspection, and it has been successfully addressed.
121. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They enjoy the subject, they are interested in the topics being discussed and most take care with the presentation of their work. They show particular interest in the various historical artefacts available to them, such as the helmets and gas masks studied by pupils in Year 6. The majority of pupils behave well, and although a few occasionally become inattentive, most are prepared to work well, both alone and with others, in finding information and in completing the tasks set. This enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, to make satisfactory progress.

122. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory, with examples of good teaching taking place in Year 6. Teachers plan lessons well. They use appropriate resources, such as photographs, posters and historical artefacts, as well as a range of strategies, for example visiting historical sites and providing opportunities for research, to foster the pupils' interest, and to encourage them to make suitable gains in their knowledge. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory, and they make very appropriate use of dates and date-lines to help develop pupils' understanding of chronology. Where teaching is good, lessons have clear objectives and specific targets are set, which suit the individual needs of the pupils. All teachers take the opportunity to further encourage pupils, by providing colourful displays of their work. They mark pupils' work regularly, but opportunities to provide comments of praise and advice are often missed.
123. The school uses the Quality and Curriculum Authority document as its scheme of work, and all aspects of the curriculum are appropriately taught. At the time of the last inspection, a lack of opportunities for pupils to undertake extended writing activities in history was reported. The school has remedied this position in part; for example, pupils in Year 3 are asked to write about a visit to the Roman Baths, and pupils in Year 5 write about the work of archeologists. Writing opportunities are better than they were in history but more would usefully support writing skills development. The school makes good provision for pupils to visit historical sites, such as Blist's Hill, to enhance their knowledge and understanding of history. The work in history also provides good support for pupils' cultural development.
124. There are no formal assessment procedures in place. Some informal assessment takes place in the classroom, but there are no arrangements for recording any information gained. Assessment is therefore not used to help the planning of appropriate work for pupils.
125. The co-ordinator has worked hard in ensuring that the shortcomings identified in the last report have been addressed. He prepares half-termly plans for his colleagues and he keeps some photographic evidence of the work being undertaken. However, he has no opportunity yet to observe the lessons being taught. Since the time of the last inspection, the standards in history have improved, and this suggests that the school has the capacity to improve still further.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

126. At the time of the 1996 inspection, information technology was a particular weakness of the school and it was noted as a key issue for improvement. At that time, standards were unsatisfactory, progress was slow and teaching was undemanding and sporadic. There were several other issues for the school to address in order to meet the statutory requirements for the subject.
127. During the current inspection it became evident that improvement has been made to a number of the issues identified last time, but also that there is still a need to work to make things better still. The co-ordinator has had much success in developing the use of the computer suite, which was commissioned after the last inspection, and has introduced a carefully thought-out programme of work for each year that focuses well on skills and knowledge. She has identified what needs doing to continue these improvements and focuses her efforts well on their completion.
128. Nonetheless, standards are unsatisfactory in all years and below average at the end of the key stage. This is largely because pupils do not have enough opportunity to experience all strands of the information technology curriculum in sufficient depth to ensure secure understanding. The school is now in a much-improved situation regarding the resources necessary to provide experience in computer control and monitoring, for example. However, the logistics of computer siting means that experiments that use a software programme to check changes in air temperature, for example, have to be abandoned when other pupils require access to the computer suite. There are not enough computers in the body of the school to allow such ongoing work or to give full scope for the cross-curricular use of computers. The few computers in class bases were used

inconsistently during the inspection week, often for individual work linked to the 'Successmaker' program being used to support work in reading.

129. Another significant factor in the depressed level of standards is related to pupils' prior experiences. Very few pupils have computers at home, so they start school with a minimal level of skills, knowledge and understanding because what they have learned at school cannot be reinforced at home. The use of the Internet, for example, is a novelty to all but a few pupils, and whilst many adapt to the demands the technology makes of their thinking and recording skills, many do not then have the vocabulary to express their ideas and knowledge in efficient ways. Thus, Year 6 pupils' efforts to use a professional desk-top publishing program are good, but the level of attainment is restricted to the use of the basic features only. Additionally, it takes considerable time for them to develop the knowledge and confidence to enliven their work by using more advanced features.
130. Where the computer suite is used intensively, pupils are enabled to build skills and knowledge at a good rate. However, intensive use is not consistent, partly because some teachers lack subject knowledge and confidence to enable them to use the facility effectively enough. All in all, pupils have inconsistent experience of computers and so they do not build the expected skills and knowledge by the age of eleven. They do make satisfactory progress in their work from a low base, but the evidence from other subjects suggests that they are capable of even more.
131. Despite the restrictions, pupils are interested in the work and they put in good effort. Behaviour is generally good in lessons although some boys tend to be more attention-seeking than the girls. Pupils are polite, courteous and helpful and they develop good relationships with the staff and other pupils. This means that they work well together at the keyboard, sharing the workload and pooling ideas. Personal development is effective, though some younger pupils, especially, are more dependent on the staff.
132. Teaching quality is satisfactory and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Teachers' subject knowledge is not always as strong as it could be and this affects the confidence with which they approach the subject. Planning is detailed, though the identification of precise objectives is inconsistent and the setting and sharing of targets with pupils in lessons is in its infancy. Teachers have appropriate expectations in lessons, they manage the pupils well and use a sound range of teaching methods. A strong feature is the way that most lessons are intensely practical and place good demands on pupils to work together to solve problems and to investigate the potential of the technology. This practice needs to be made more common throughout the school.
133. The work of the co-ordinator has helped to improve the provision for information technology, and although there is still much to do the management of the subject is now good. Assessment is recognised by the co-ordinator as requiring enhancement and she has started work on a draft record of skills and knowledge to keep track of pupils' progress. The monitoring of information technology is a weakness that is also recognised by managers. The Computer Club is a useful session to help older pupils to develop better confidence, skills and knowledge in computer use.
134. The key for sustained improvement lies in the revamping of the timetable for information technology, whether in the suite or in classrooms. Some additional resources may be necessary for this to work. It is, however, clear that staff, led by the keen, committed and successful co-ordinator, have the will and capability to complete the task.

MUSIC

135. The last inspection found that attainment in music was below the national average and that progress was not good enough in listening, appraising, composing and performing. However, it was noted that there was reasonable progress in keeping rhythm and learning how to play musical instruments, with older pupils using tuned instruments creatively. The quality of teaching was

mainly satisfactory but pupils' responses often lacked imagination. Standards are now at the level expected for pupils aged eleven years, whilst learning and teaching are satisfactory, and pupils' attitudes to music are good. There has been improvement since the last inspection.

136. In Year 3, pupils begin the process of listening and appraising as they identify high and low, fast and slow, long and short and loud and quiet sounds. They make commendable efforts at sustaining their listening skills as they listen to the sounds arising from the taped music that the teacher has chosen carefully to stimulate interest. Pupils continue to make use of their listening skills in Year 4 but use them to effectively perform different sections of a song as they focus on duration and structure in music. In Year 5 they focus on pitch and tempo, with boys and girls working well together in performing a song with good measures of self-confidence. In Year 6 pupils' appraisal skills are further developed as they give their written views on a range of songs from World War 2. This is linked to their history work and ensures that pupils have some understanding of how music fits into the social aspects of life. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress in developing their musical skills. Skills are much enhanced for those pupils who choose to sing with the choir. The newly qualified teacher, who is acting as co-ordinator for music, leads them in acquiring good levels of pitch in their voices as they sing joyously together. A smaller number of pupils also benefit from opportunities to learn to play recorders and violins and are taught by members of the local authority's music support team.
137. Pupils enjoy their music making together. They are generally well behaved. Their attitudes to their music making are clearly shown by their good levels of concentration whether they are working as whole classes or in smaller groups. Their social skills and awareness are well developed as they make music together successfully.
138. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good features. It is particularly enhanced when pupils join together in the choir and have the benefit of working with the newly qualified teacher who ensures their good performance levels in the skills of pitch and rhythm. A member of the local authority music support team further develops pupils' skills of playing instruments and performing together through good teaching. Where teaching is best by class teachers there is a clear introduction to learning about the variety of sounds, for example in Year 3. There is a good range of presentation of work. Open-ended questioning also enables pupils to respond and consolidate their knowledge and enjoyment of making music. Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to play pitched instruments but in giving practice time the pace of learning slows.
139. The newly qualified teacher who is preparing to lead developments in music has a clear view of where the subject needs to improve. An appropriate outline action plan has been drawn up. A further scheme of work to support non-specialist teachers more effectively is being considered. Resources are being audited satisfactorily. The missed opportunities to promote music, such as at assembly times, are being included in the action plan so that the improvements in music provision can be further enhanced.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

140. At the time of the school's previous inspection, attainment and progress and the quality of teaching were all reported as satisfactory. Current inspection findings show that standards, in all aspects of the subject, are similar to those expected for pupils of the same age, and that the standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Pupils make satisfactory progress.
141. At Key Stage 2, pupils throughout the school successfully throw, catch and hit a ball, and they confidently develop their skills through playing small-sided games, such as cricket. In Year 4 they successfully perform the basic gymnastic actions of travelling, on both hands and feet, and introduce jumps, turns, rolls and twists into their movements. They confidently use both the floor

and simple apparatus to develop their skills. Pupils in Year 3 successfully compose and control their dance movements, showing appropriate variety in shape, size and level. They work confidently with a partner in developing a simple sequence of movements. Pupils in Year 6 develop their running skills successfully, showing particular enthusiasm in working within a group and carrying out relay activities. In Years 4 and 5, pupils attend swimming lessons, with most showing suitable confidence in the water. Higher-attaining pupils successfully swim up to 25 metres unaided. During residential visits to Kingswood, the pupils in Years 5 and 6 develop their outdoor adventure skills effectively,

142. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good, and sometimes very good. They enjoy themselves, they are keen to be involved, they concentrate well and they try hard to improve their work. They work well with partners in dance, and within a group when they are playing cricket. This all helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, to make satisfactory progress. Pupils attending swimming lessons make a particularly good effort with their work, and this enables them to make good progress. Behaviour is always good, and they are particularly careful to carry items of equipment safely. At the baths, pupils are very aware of safety procedures, and they pay immediate attention to the whistle being blown by the teacher.
143. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, with good teaching taking place in swimming. Teachers provide sound planning, clear instructions and enthusiasm. They usually change appropriately for lessons, and they all join in and demonstrate for pupils, helping them to make satisfactory gains in their various skills. Where teaching is good in swimming, teachers' subject knowledge is good, instruction is particularly helpful and the pupils are kept very busy throughout. In all lessons teachers show good management skills, and good relationships are developed. They often use pupils to demonstrate good practice, but opportunities are sometimes missed to discuss the quality of the work, which would help pupils identify the areas where they might improve their work. The pace of lessons is often brisk, especially in swimming, but the pace of lessons slows for individual pupils, when they queue to use apparatus in gymnastics. Although lessons are appropriately planned, their duration limits the amount of time that pupils have for learning and developing their skills. For example, in a lesson seen in dance, once the pupils had completed their warm up, and practised their basic movements, there was little time left to practise and refine movements, and extend them into a sequence. Teachers are very aware of the safety of their pupils, and they always remind them of the routines which they should follow.
144. Until recently the school used a variety of local education authority scheme of work, and is intending to adopt the Quality and Curriculum Authority document. All aspects of work are suitably covered, with good provision being made for swimming, as the school has its own pool. The school makes good provision for extracurricular activities, which are well attended by pupils. The cricket club, in particular, is very well supported by both boys and girls, with both pupils and teachers showing particular enthusiasm for the game. The opportunities provided for pupils to play team games successfully enhance their social development. Activities involving counting, especially in games, give support to the school's initiative in numeracy.
145. No formal assessment procedures are in place, and although there is some informal assessment during lessons, nothing is recorded. Any information gained is inadequate to accurately identify pupils' current skill levels, or to help provide suitable future work.
146. The current co-ordinator is a newly qualified teacher, who will only take over full responsibility for the subject in September. He is enthusiastic and he has drawn up an appropriate action plan for the future development of the subject. At present he has no opportunity to see any lessons taking place. He has, however, recently arranged for the purchase of new gymnastic mats, recognising that the school is very short of this type of equipment. The introduction of the new scheme of work, and the provision of an appropriate action plan, suggest that the school still has the capacity to develop the subject further.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

147. At the time of the previous inspection, standards in religious education were satisfactory and pupils made appropriate gains in knowledge and skills as they moved through the school. Teaching was satisfactory at that time, although the emphasis on spiritual matters was not as pronounced as on the moral, social and cultural elements of the subject. Since 1996, religious education has seen a number of improvements and today, progress is good, teaching is effective and standards are as expected with some strengths.
148. There is much evidence to show that religious education is a subject that is taken very seriously at Palfrey Junior School. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and Judaism. More than this, they also develop a strong moral sense and a clear understanding of what makes life special. Overall, standards in religious education are as expected by the locally agreed syllabus. In the oral parts of lessons, pupils show their good knowledge of their own religion and a satisfactory understanding of Christianity. Most pupils can say what they know and understand, albeit sometimes rather hesitantly. They find it difficult to express themselves as well in their writing.
149. Because the curriculum for religious education is rich and well balanced, pupils have ample chances to share their personal ideas about how they should behave to each other, why the world is special, how it should be cared for and what God means to them. In addition, pupils learn to compare the symbols, stories and practices of different religions to help them understand what is similar, but also what is diverse. Parents play a good role in this, as there is much evidence to show how they provide additional artefacts, information, interpretation and explanation for staff about the many facets of their own religion.
150. Assemblies make some contribution to pupils' knowledge, understanding and empathy in religious education, but this is not as strong as is found in many schools. Opportunities to exploit the spiritual qualities of music, artwork, stories and themes are sometimes missed in assembly.
151. Pupils respond well to religious education lessons. This is shown not just in their good behaviour, attitudes and relationships in lessons, but also in the effort they put into their work and the amount produced at one time. The scrutiny of work completed during the current school year is clear evidence for the pupils' interest, enjoyment and effort. It is also very apparent that pupils develop high levels of tolerance and support for those of different religious beliefs, and that the school is a harmonious community where everyone is valued.
152. The quality of teaching is good overall. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge, they hold high expectations of what the pupils know, understand and can do and they teach with confidence, directness and care. Planning is satisfactory but would benefit from more consistent identification of precise objectives for learning and the use of comments to identify ways to improve when marking work is uncommon. The pace of lessons can be very brisk, though there is variation in this, and where the pace slackens, pupils become restless and impatient to start the active part of the work.
153. Management of religious education is good. the co-ordinator is hard working, alert and successful. She has ensured that the curriculum has evolved into a well-planned and thought-out whole and that teachers have the knowledge and confidence to teach the subject well. The direct monitoring of teaching, learning, the curriculum and standards is a weakness in management, and assessment procedures and the use of information about how well the pupils are doing to give more precise focus to subsequent work are both in the very early stages of development. Assessment and monitoring are, therefore, the main issues for action in religious education.

154. Religious education has improved substantially in recent years and in many respects it is a subject strength of the school. There are one or two aspects that require enhancement but all staff share the determination to improve standards and the quality of the work.