

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dudley, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103817

Headteacher: Mrs J Grosvenor

Reporting inspector: Mr C Kessell
20695

Dates of inspection: 10th - 13th January 2000

Inspection number: 190812

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Highgate Road
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Dudley
West Midlands

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr S Brown

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr C Kessell	Registered inspector	Physical education	How high are standards?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Mr K Oliver	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Ms N Bee	Team inspector	Art	
		Design & technology	
		Special educational needs	
		Equal opportunities	
Mr J Collier	Team inspector	Mathematics	
		Music	
Mrs M Speakman	Team inspector	English	
		Religious education	
Mrs W Knight	Team inspector	Science	How well are pupils taught?
		Information technology	
Mr A Bond	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		History	
Ms M Spark	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
		Areas of learning for the under-fives	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has 348 full-time pupils and is above average in size. It is part of the Dudley Education Action Zone. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is above average. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals and the number identified as having special educational needs are also above average. The school population is very mobile. Attainment of the four-year olds when they start school is well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a lively, friendly school that is well managed. The teachers are hardworking and the pupils enjoy their work. Although standards are below average, they are steadily rising and there is a commitment to improvement amongst the governors and staff. The school operates effectively and provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. Behaviour is good.
- National strategies for literacy and numeracy have been well implemented and many other elements of the curriculum are well organised.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. This includes a school orchestra.
- The headteacher and deputy head provide good leadership. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.
- Pupils speaking English as an additional language are well supported.
- The Language Unit offers very good provision.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics, science and information technology.
- Provision for the children under five.
- The use of assessment information.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has moved forward satisfactorily since the last inspection in December 1996. The development and monitoring of the school curriculum have improved and a range of assessment procedures have been introduced. However, not all of the information provided by assessment is used effectively. The School Improvement Plan clearly identifies the school priorities and the headteacher and deputy head are now more involved in the development of teaching and the curriculum. Standards are still below average, although there is evidence of a steady improvement over time. Some teachers still need to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve.

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	D	D	C
Mathematics	E	D	C	B
Science	E	D	C	B

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

The above table shows a general improvement in standards since 1997. Results of the 1999 national tests indicated that mathematics and science were average when compared with all schools and above average when compared with schools of a similar nature. Although standards in English were below average when compared with all schools, standards were average when compared to similar schools. Evidence from inspection would indicate that current standards are below average in English, mathematics, science and information technology. The current Year 6 contains a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs and a number of pupils have not spent a significant time in the school. This has an adverse effect on standards. Standards in religious education are what would be expected.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are interested in their work and keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and in the playground is good. Pupils clearly understand what is expected of them.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good overall. Older pupils enjoy the extra responsibilities they are given. Relationships are good.
Attendance	Attendance is below the national average.

Although attendance is below the national average, the school is working extremely hard to improve attendance rates.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Although teaching is judged to be satisfactory overall, 10% of teaching is very good or better. These lessons are very well organised and the teachers have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Pupils work at a good pace and make good progress. Six per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory, with these lessons being unproductive and often poorly organised. The best teaching of English and mathematics was found towards the end of Key Stage 2, where lessons recognised the needs of all pupils and there was particular emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. In less well organised lessons, not all pupils made the progress of which they were capable. Teaching in the Language Unit was consistently good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good range of worthwhile opportunities within the curriculum. The curriculum is well balanced and meets statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision is satisfactory although some of the pupils' targets for learning could be more precise.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural education is good. Moral education is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Highgate Primary School takes good care of its pupils.

The school values its partnership with parents and is always looking to strengthen parents' involvement in their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by her senior staff, particularly the deputy head. The ethos of the school is very positive. All staff work well together.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive of the school. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a general view of its work, but analysis of data and assessment information could be used more effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Staff, time and resources are generally used well. It is unfortunate that the two reception classes are in different parts of the school.

The school has a good number of suitably qualified teachers. Although the school building is unattractive on the outside, inside it is bright and cheerful. There is no outside area specifically for the children under five. Resources are satisfactory overall, but the stock of books is only just adequate.

Monitoring of lessons to make teaching and learning better has only limited impact. The headteacher and governors look to provide best value when considering the school's use of resources.

The school does not fulfil statutory requirements with regard to a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils like school. • The school expects the pupils to work hard. • There is a good cultural mix. • The general atmosphere is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school working closely with parents. • Information about how pupils are getting on.

The above views are taken from the pre-inspection meeting that was attended by eight parents and the 50 responses to the parents' questionnaire. Evidence from inspection supports the parents' positive views. The school values working with parents, holds twice-yearly meetings, that are well attended, and provides a comprehensive end of year report. The newly formed Dudley Education Action Zone, of which the school is a part, will focus on increasing parental involvement in their children's learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 Pupils enter the school with a wide range of ability, but with that of the majority being well below average. This is confirmed by the school's baseline assessment and inspection findings. The children achieve good progress with their personal and social development. Starting with poor social skills as they enter school, the children develop self-confidence as they begin to understand the school routines and expectations of their teachers. In language and literacy children listen to stories attentively and enjoy songs and rhymes. Although they are unfamiliar with books when they enter the reception class most are able to handle books appropriately and with confidence by the time they are five. They begin to understand the differences between text and pictures. However, some of the children's learning is restricted because there is insufficient focus on the development of oral skills. Children develop their mathematical skills satisfactorily. Although their knowledge and understanding is limited on entry into reception, through practice and support most children are able to count to 10 by the time they are five. Children make steady progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world, although they achieve levels that are below those of most children of their age. The children's creative and physical development reach appropriate levels. They produce bright painted pictures and sing and clap rhythms together. Children use space effectively and run, jump, hop and balance confidently. However, access to an outdoor play area with a suitable range of equipment is not available and inhibits some learning.

2 National test results for 1999 at the end of Key Stage 1 show that the standards achieved were below average in reading but close to the national average in writing and mathematics. When using the average National Curriculum points achieved by all pupils, standards were below average in reading and writing when compared to similar schools and above average in mathematics. Although test results show standards below average in reading and writing overall, average points levels have increased since the last inspection in 1996. The pattern is the same for mathematics. National test results in 1999 for Key Stage 2 showed that standards were close to the national average in English, mathematics and science. Although the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above was above average in science, it was below average in English. When compared with similar schools, standards were above average in mathematics and science and average in English. At face value the National Curriculum test results in 1999 paint a positive picture of pupils' achievement as they move through the school from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. However, closer analysis of pupils' performance presents a different story. When comparing the average National Curriculum levels of the 1999 Key Stage 2 cohort of pupils with their Key Stage 1 average levels, progress is not consistent. Evidence from inspection indicates that the school worked hard with this year group in Year 6, and that teaching and learning are inconsistent earlier in the key stage.

3 Evidence from inspection including lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and displays, and discussions with teachers and pupils, indicates that standards are below average in English, science and information technology at both key stages. In mathematics pupils achieve standards that are average by the end of Key Stage 1 but below average in Key Stage 2. Standards in religious education are average at both key stages, with pupils achieving the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.

4 Pupils in Key Stage 1 listen carefully to their teachers particularly when stories are being told or instructions are given out. They enjoy talking and holding discussions with their friends but are less confident when answering questions presented by adults. Many of the pupils have a limited vocabulary. They read simple texts accurately, often with expression and have developed an appropriate range of strategies to cope with unfamiliar words. Simple common words are spelt accurately and punctuation is used but their limited vocabulary impacts on the quality of their writing, which is often repetitive and unimaginative. In mathematics pupils are beginning to understand the principles of place value and are able to complete number patterns and sequences. They recognise common shapes and construct simple graphs from information that has been collected. However, their ability to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems is more limited. Although pupils are able to discuss the areas of science that they have covered, pupils' scientific knowledge lacks sufficient depth. Much of the work that is recorded is at a simple level and does not challenge the pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding.

5 At Key Stage 2 many of the pupils still have a limited vocabulary but are more confident in talking to adults or being in front of the class. They always listen carefully to each other and their teachers. Reading is below average, with only the more able pupils reading demanding texts with fluency and then confidently explaining the content of the book. The majority of pupils are able to explain how to use a library for research. They do understand the need to plan work and the importance of redrafting their writing. Work is often interesting and accurate but still limited because of the restricted use of language. The pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding are below average overall. Although a number of more able pupils have a good understanding of the rules of number, many lower attaining pupils are only able to make simple calculations with numbers below 100. Pupils are provided with an appropriate range of scientific experiences, for example learning about the functions of major organs in the human body, but their understanding of the subject is underdeveloped. They are given insufficient opportunities to use and apply their scientific knowledge of the subject and have limited investigative skills.

6 Although standards are generally below average in English, mathematics and science at both key stages, standards are rising. Using the average National Curriculum points for all core subjects, results year on year at Key Stage 2 are improving above the national trend. Although inspection evidence indicates that some boys arrive at school with higher attainment than the girls there is no consistent trend or significant differences in attainment by the end of Key Stage 2. The school acknowledges that the current cohort of Year 6 pupils is unlikely to achieve the standards seen last year in the National Curriculum tests. The current Year 6 has a significant number of pupils with special educational needs and this is reflected in the school's targets for the year 2000 which are sufficiently challenging for this year group. The school has very successfully initiated the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and has continued with a policy for grouping pupils by ability in English, mathematics and science as part of the continued process of raising standards.

7 Pupils make satisfactory progress through the school in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, information technology and religious education. Achievement in reading is often good, and towards the end of Key Stage 2 pupils achieve well in mathematics. In the non-core subjects of design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education, progress is sound. Progress in art is good, as are some elements of music in Key Stage 2. Although pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory, there are some inconsistencies. The school groups pupils by ability in English, mathematics and science but there is still often a wide range of ability in each group. This is not always sufficiently taken into account by all teachers, which impacts on the quality of learning. Consequently, in some lessons more able pupils are not being sufficiently challenged while in other situations less able pupils find the work too hard. Where ability groups are well managed, for example, in Year 6 mathematics, the pupils make good progress. In good lessons where there is sufficient pace and challenge and time is used well, pupils learn effectively. Achievement in art is good because the subject has a high priority in the school, lessons are well organised and

teachers have good subject knowledge. In other subjects where subject knowledge is less secure and teachers are not so confident, pupils' achievement can vary. This is the case with information technology. Although achievement is satisfactory when pupils work in the computer suite, learning is not so consistent back in classrooms and in supporting other areas of the curriculum.

8 Pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate work for their differing needs and abilities, and make satisfactory progress. Progress is monitored through the pupils' individual education plans; however, some of the learning targets contained in the plans are not rigorous enough which inhibits the rate of progress for some pupils.

9 The support work for pupils who speak English as an additional language is very well focused to meet individual and group needs. This effective support, particularly in Years 5 and 6, has contributed significantly in raising attainment in English, mathematics and science to that of the majority by the end of the Key Stage 2.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10 Pupils enjoy their time in the school. They are interested in their work and keen to learn. Younger pupils particularly enjoy practical work and the responsibilities and relationships, which go with sharing and looking after resources. Older pupils are highly motivated and become absorbed by their studies.

11 The school's high-profile multi-cultural ethos is one of its major strengths. It successfully promotes racial harmony and tolerance in all aspects of school life and work. Pupils have predominantly good relationships with their teachers and other adults in and around the school. They are polite, confident and have respect for authority. They recognise and care for each other's needs including, for example, those with behavioural and learning difficulties. In the dining room older pupils help look after the younger ones very effectively. They take great pride in these responsibilities.

12 Overall standards of behaviour in class, between lessons and in the playground are good. There was one fixed-period exclusion during the last school year. Pupils know and understand what is expected of them and what to do if they have problems. A well-established system of rewards and sanctions plus a network of 'no-bullying zones' deals very effectively with any bullying and bad behaviour when they occur. Rare racist incidents are dealt with promptly and properly.

13 Overall, attendance is unsatisfactory and below the national average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14 Teaching is satisfactory overall with 94% of lessons observed being judged sound or better. Of these, a third of lessons were good and about a tenth very good. Teaching is consistently good or better in the Language Unit with half the lessons being very good. Very good lessons were not seen in Key Stage 1, where one lesson in every ten was unsatisfactory. The teaching enables pupils to learn appropriately throughout the school and across the curriculum.

15 Literacy and numeracy are soundly taught, and there is a higher proportion of good lessons in these sessions than in most other subjects. Teachers usually plan effectively against the national frameworks and conduct lessons to the recommended structure and timing. Teachers' subject knowledge, including the development of basic skills, in both literacy and numeracy is sound. However, as at the time of the last inspection, teachers are less successful at planning suitable work for pupils of differing ability. While pupils with English as an additional language are well supported and make good progress, and lower attainers and those with special educational needs have regular

consolidation, higher attaining pupils are rarely challenged. This shortcoming also applies to most other subjects of the curriculum.

16 One of the strengths of the teaching is the clear statement of the objectives at the beginning of lessons and the reference to these again at the end. This ensures pupils know what is expected and on what to focus. Most teachers are skilful at managing pupils, many of whom have emotional and behavioural difficulties, so that they respond positively to the opportunities provided. Pupils respect their teachers and are genuinely valued in return. These strengths have been maintained since the last inspection and are factors which create purposeful lessons where all pupils are engaged in learning most of the time, and this climate is reinforced by regular, relevant homework which supports work across the curriculum. This consistent use of homework is an improvement since the last inspection.

17 In the better lessons teachers' good subject knowledge provides inspiration to pupils, such as in history in Year 1 where pupils discuss photographs, or in Year 5 where they role- play life in Victorian times. This also has a positive effect on art and music lessons. However, weaknesses in subject knowledge in science, information technology and physical education sometimes result in activities which are limited in scope or type or are inappropriate. High expectations of pupils in terms of what and how much they can achieve are also features of good numeracy lessons at the upper end of Key Stage 2 where all pupils are expected to participate and targets are set for the completion of examples. However, the pace of some lessons and the amount of work pupils are expected to do are shortcomings, even in lessons which are otherwise satisfactory, just as at the time of the last inspection.

18 Teachers are usually good at questioning pupils to check on their understanding and promote further thought such as in Year 6 literacy, and then in using the information to provide appropriate support. However, the effectiveness of marking is less consistent. Some teachers do provide regular and useful feedback to pupils so they know how they can improve further, but this is not seen consistently through the school.

19 Teachers often work well together or with classroom assistants to provide useful support to pupils. This is particularly effective where teachers supporting pupils with English as an additional language work alongside colleagues, but valuable teamwork also occurs in information technology and literacy lessons as well as where special educational needs assistants work with pupils.

20 The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Teachers are aware of pupils with special educational needs. The support teacher and classroom assistants give sound quality support; however when pupils are withdrawn for extra support there is sometimes insufficient liaison between the teachers involved.

21 Pupils acquire new knowledge and skills at an appropriate rate. In most classes they are interested and engage readily in lessons, becoming fully involved and being keen to complete tasks and to show their new learning during plenary sessions. In many subjects they produce much work, and they readily practise physical skills in physical education lessons as in Year 4 dance in preparation for a poetry performance. They are less enthusiastic to participate in discussion when they are required to reason or explain their thinking, although they are still willing to follow up ideas if the work is practical. The pupils' concentration is less consistent when they are expected to listen for over-long periods of time.

22 While pupils readily settle to and complete straightforward tasks, if they fail to understand the work immediately significant numbers need to be brought back to the task by adults. Some pupils who do not know what they are doing or why they are doing it fail to seek appropriate assistance. Where pupils are clear about how they can improve following comments from teachers they do strive

to do what has been suggested. Good advice provided in a Year 4 art lesson, for example, enabled the pupils to improve their drawings of seashells.

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

23 The school provides a good range of worthwhile opportunities within the curriculum which is relevant to pupils' interests and aptitudes. The curriculum is well balanced and meets the statutory requirements to teach all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Established schemes of work are in place for each subject, the majority of which are of good quality and give pupils appropriate opportunities to make educational progress. The school has devised systems whereby senior staff monitor and review the curricular opportunities regularly to ensure they match the needs of pupils and that whole-school procedures are being followed properly by all teachers.

24 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Individual educational programmes are set out which allow suitable progress to be made. However, some targets for improvement are imprecise and insufficient attention is given to the setting of programmes for pupils with specific mathematical difficulties. Although more able pupils are identified by the school, they are rarely given challenging, appropriately matched work.

25 The school has good strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The national strategies are embedded into the school curriculum and the standards of achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 are improving in English and mathematics. The skills gained by pupils in literacy and numeracy are reinforced successfully in other subject areas, particularly in religious education, geography, history and science.

26 The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities which enriches pupils' learning. School teams participate in local football, cricket and netball competitions and a gym club meets regularly. Clubs for art, 'bookworms', spelling and computers are organised by staff. This allows pupils to further develop their skills and talents. The extra-curricular provision for music is particularly strong and involves a large number of pupils. Currently the school has a choir of 50 pupils and an orchestra that performs on special school occasions. These activities allow pupils to increase self-esteem, acquire skills and develop interests for later life.

27 The curriculum generally provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils to make progress. However, a few pupils miss out on some important lessons when they are withdrawn for extra tuition.

28 There is sound school provision for pupils' personal and social education. Appropriate consideration is given to the teaching of sex education and drug awareness within the curriculum. The school promotes a healthy and safe lifestyle, through regular whole-school initiatives, targeting topics such as healthy eating, 'stranger danger' and road safety. The teaching of these topics give pupils the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions in later life.

29 The school has good links with the local and wider community which make a supportive contribution to pupils' education. Contacts with the local church are particularly strong. The school choir sings in the church periodically and the vicar regularly leads stimulating whole-school acts of collective worship. Visits to non-Christian places of worship also broaden pupils' religious perspective.

30 The Comenius Project, an international initiative, has enabled the school to forge links with Italian and Danish schools. In 1998 a party of older pupils visited northern Italy and experienced a European dimension, visiting the families of their 'pen pals'. The 'Jungle Club', a home-school

community initiative, allows parents and younger pupils the opportunity of meeting and gaining valuable advice from support agencies. The school is now installed on the Internet but has had little opportunity to offer this facility to pupils.

31 Mutual benefits have been derived from constructive relationships with partner institutions, especially the local secondary school. Annual induction days are arranged for Year 6 pupils and visiting secondary staff meet and teach pupils prior to the start of the new school year. Additionally, the school receives regular placements for work experience from its receiving secondary school. Two staff, who are qualified teacher training mentors, support incoming students from a West Midland initial teacher training centre. The school is well supported by the local education authority's advisory teacher centre whose staff provide advice on curriculum development so enhancing teachers' knowledge and expertise.

32 The school provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural education is good and for moral education it is very good. The school does not comply with the legal requirements to hold a daily act of collective worship because once a week a class 'circle time' is substituted. This session does not contain a period of reflection, prayer or meditation. However, acts of collective worship are broadly Christian in nature and make a powerful contribution to shaping pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

33 Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their experiences within the school curriculum provision. In religious education, older pupils write their own sensitive prayers thanking God for looking after their family. In literacy well-told teacher stories promote a sense of awe and wonder and excitement in pupils, as exemplified in the tales of King Arthur and *The Mousehole Cat*. Stimulating artefacts are skilfully displayed, particularly in history, which act as a 'spark' to develop pupils' curiosity and interest in the past. In whole-school acts of collective worship pupils are encouraged to consider their own values and attitudes and those of other faiths through the presentation of a range of different themes. These are stimulating, colourful occasions using religious symbols, traditional costumes and songs, as demonstrated in a presentation by pupils and staff focusing on the Islamic celebration of Eid.

34 The school provides a very good moral code for pupils' development through the 'Behaviour Street' scheme. Pupils have the choice between taking the 'right' and 'wrong' road and the consequences are clearly defined in terms of rewards and sanctions. Consideration for others is shown in 'circle time'. In Year 2 pupils seated on the carpet take turns in expressing their views. The remaining pupils listen carefully and show respect. Moral principles underpin the school's daily routines. Pupils are rewarded with certificates in the weekly 'praise' assembly for commitment to work and for honesty and integrity. In reception classes children are taught at an early stage the value of "please" and "thank you". The pupils are made aware of the needs of the less fortunate and raise funds for disaster appeals and national charities. The provision for moral education is a strength of the school.

35 The school has created a well ordered framework within which social development blossoms. Teaching and non-teaching staff provide good role models for pupils to follow. They encourage pupils to relate well to each other, especially at lunchtime in the dining area. Pupils move along corridors behaving maturely and showing courtesy towards passing adults and pupils. Staff create opportunities for pupils to work together in group tasks in lessons and encourage pupils to use initiative in collecting and returning materials for their work. Older pupils help reception staff at lunchtimes to tidy up play areas and groups of pupils are encouraged to collect litter at the end of playtimes.

36 The school has a strong commitment to teaching pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the diversity and richness of other cultures. Good quality displays in corridors and

classrooms reflect a wide range of cultural heritage. The millennium time line, which runs the length of the school corridors, is a visual reminder of the religious, aesthetic, technological and historical development of civilisation over 2000 years. The school promotes western European culture through music and a breadth of art activities including sculpture, photographs and three-dimensional work. Through visits to places of local interest such as galleries, museums and places of worship cultural development is enhanced. The richness of other, non-European cultures is strongly conveyed in acts of collective worship, focused topics, school displays and through special visits and visitors. The school staff who are representative of ethnic minority cultures, promote a variety of activities which enrich pupils' understanding of cultural diversity. The painting of mendhi patterns and the sharing of symbolic food are good examples. Bilingual text is prominent in school and African-Caribbean characters feature in stories. In geography, compare and contrast elements are used well in the study of places, such as India.

37 The school has improved its curricular opportunities since the last inspection. The curriculum is monitored more effectively by senior staff. However, an outline curriculum map is not in place, so a comprehensive overview of the place of each subject topic within each year group can not be clearly defined. The adoption of the national numeracy and literacy strategies has improved curriculum provision considerably. The previously reported weaknesses have been addressed thoroughly by the successful implementation of these national initiatives. The provision for spiritual and moral education has improved since the last inspection. There are many more opportunities for pupils to experience genuine reflection within the school day. The school's introduction of the behaviour code known as 'Behaviour Street' has further enhanced pupils' moral development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38 The school takes good care of its pupils. Arrangements for the security and safety of all are excellent. Pupils are closely supervised at all times with particular attention paid to the needs of the younger ones at the beginning and end of the school day. Child protection procedures are well established and feature close links with all the appropriate authorities

39 The school is working commendably hard to improve its attendance rates and bring them up to the national average. Registration and record keeping are rigorous, with monitoring systems which prompt action as and when it is needed. The majority of parents support a well-publicised and effective follow-up system for dealing with unauthorised absences.

40 The school ensures that all pupils are treated equally, regardless of culture, race, gender or social background.

41 Individual pupils' record cards are up to date and contain copies of all reports to parents. Individual Records of Achievement are used for samples of work chosen by the pupils themselves. They also contain targets and objectives, which with advice and support from their teachers, pupils set for themselves. The process supports pupils' achievement well.

42 Assessment is very much a part of every day life at Highgate. Information on pupils' achievements and learning are gathered through a wide variety of national, local and school schemes as well National Curriculum tests at Key Stages 1 and 2. However, consistent use is not made of this information throughout the school to guide planning. For example, in English, although there are quite detailed procedures in place to assess standards and pupils' achievements, little use is made of this information to analyse whether teaching has been successful or to plan for future learning. The school monitors the achievement of different groups of pupils such as ethnic groups or gender. Although the achievements of these different groups are identified, there is insufficient analysis of this information to improve achievement overall.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43 Highgate is a harmonious multiracial community with just under a third of pupils coming from ethnic-minority backgrounds. There is however no ethnic minority parental representation on the governing body at the moment. The governors are aware of this problem and are working hard to solve it.

44 Highgate values its partnership with parents and schemes such as the home-school contract are intended to strengthen parents' involvement in their children's education. Parents are encouraged to monitor homework and help with reading. They are provided with comprehensive handbooks and kept in touch with what is going on in the school through regular editions of the *Highgate Post* and letters to home. They are kept up to date with their children's progress at twice-yearly parents' meetings, which have greater than 95% involvement, and a comprehensive end of year report.

45 A small but active parents' association, 'The Friends of Highgate' organises well-attended social events and raises funds. Initiatives such as the under-five, computer and Urdu clubs run by the bilingual unit are very effective community-school bridges. A number of parents are employed in non-teaching posts in and around the school but very few volunteers come into school to help, for example, through the Reading Buddy scheme. The school is trying to overcome the problem. It has for instance embraced the new Dudley Education Action Zone as a means of increasing parental involvement. However, it is far too early to judge the impact of this initiative.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46 The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by her senior staff, particularly the acting deputy head. It is quite apparent that the headteacher's philosophy of "creating an atmosphere where people feel good about themselves" is a significant feature in the management of the school. The school has been awarded the 'Investors in People' charter mark. There is clear direction and staff are very aware of the need to raise standards. It is discussed regularly and celebrated when achieved. Standards are rising although they are still below average. Teacher morale is high and great efforts have been made to build a team; however, this does not distract the management team from facing up to their responsibilities in raising standards and asking challenging questions of the staff. In response to the previous inspection the school has a number of processes for monitoring teaching and the curriculum. Planning is checked weekly and if any issues arise from this scrutiny, for example in a particular subject, the subject co-ordinator is involved by the headteacher to help support staff. This is good practice and is an effective form of delegation. However, some subject co-ordinators are more effective than others and their impact is more significant on their subjects. The headteacher has tried a number of practices for monitoring teaching. The current practice is a 'drop-in' approach with no particular focus. Again, if there are subject concerns co-ordinators are involved. However, given some of the inconsistencies in teaching, observed during the inspection, one would have to question whether the impact of this approach is sufficiently rigorous. Both the headteacher and deputy head have an important presence around the school. They are available during lunchtimes and school breaks and this contributes to the high standards of behaviour.

47 The governing body is extremely supportive of the school and staff. Although some governors are relatively inexperienced there are a significant number who know the school well and have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are a well organised body and well managed by the Chair of Governors who is particularly influential and works very hard for the school. The governing body itinerary identifies very clearly all of the governors' meetings along with the meeting dates of the different committees that support the smooth running of the school. Many of the governors visit the school regularly and as part of a monitoring process the governors' curriculum and standards committee visit classes at least once a term. This is a well thought out procedure and also includes a written protocol for governor visits. Issues are considered very carefully. There was a considered debate about the advantages and disadvantages of being part of the Dudley Education Action Zone and the management of resources in terms of best value are considered carefully. The governors try to ensure that finances are well spent and recently changed the school cleaning contract to ensure better value.

48 The previous inspection identified weaknesses in development planning and this issue has been rectified through the school improvement plan. This clearly identifies school priorities and the governors also have an opportunity to contribute to this document. Subject co-ordinators are responsible for their own action plans and evaluating their success. The school undertakes careful analysis of pupils' performance as part of the on-going drive to raise standards. This has produced considerable information about individual pupils and groups of pupils. However, the school would acknowledge that they are suffering from 'information overload' and staff need to decide what information is helpful and what is not. Until this happens the impact data analysis has on performance is minimal. The targets set by the school in English and mathematics for the year 2000 reflect the current standards in Year 6, where approximately 30% of the pupils have special educational needs. The targets were carefully thought through and the process was not taken lightly. If the impact of performance data analysis could be more effective and teaching made more consistent, the targets in the future might be more ambitious.

49 The school has a good number of suitably qualified teachers with a range of experience. They are able to deliver the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils including those with special

educational needs, those who have English as an additional language and those who are under five. The school has a favourable pupil/teacher ratio and this reflects the importance that the governors place on employing the maximum number of staff allowed by the budget. A range of support staff makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. All staff have suitable job descriptions and are offered opportunities for extra training. Teachers, in particular, can express personal needs and these are assessed along with the school's priorities in the school improvement plan. A programme of courses is then organised and is effective in promoting proper staff development. A two-year cycle of teacher appraisal is well established, though the 1999 cycle has not yet been completed. A particular focus is chosen as a basis for appraisal and this is of benefit to the school and to individual teachers. Newly-qualified teachers are very well supported by the school in line with the comprehensive policy that has recently been adopted.

50 The school building, though unattractive on the outside, is bright and cheerful inside. It is in good decorative order and colourful and informative displays brighten the corridors and classrooms. The accommodation is adequate to deliver the curriculum and every available space is productively used. The new computer suite, however, is cramped and claustrophobic. The ill-fitting windows continue to pose problems as highlighted in the last report. Pupils, at times, are prevented from working comfortably as icy draughts force their way in and reduce classroom temperatures. The hall is sufficiently large to accommodate the whole school for assemblies and provides a suitable space for physical education. Adjacent to the hall is an impressive 'art gallery' where pupils' work is attractively displayed. Outside there is a large playing field and two extensive playgrounds. There is however no outside area specifically for the under-fives that provides a secure environment and suitable safe surfaces for their activities. The two classrooms for the under-fives are some distance from each other, making it difficult for teachers to share equipment.

51 The two libraries are attractively decorated. The stock of books however is only just adequate and many are of poor quality through continuous use, for example the picture books in the Key Stage 1 library. Books in the Key Stage 2 library are properly catalogued but some labels are faded and difficult to see. Neither library is used fully to improve personal study skills, to promote higher literacy skills or to encourage pupils to read more widely. The school improvement plan has targets to improve this situation but very little has been achieved yet. The stock of fiction books for classroom use in Key Stage 2 is limited and of poor quality. Resources for science, music and religious education are good and the school has an above average number of computers in the computer suite and around the school. Those in classrooms are not used regularly enough, however, to enable pupils to practise their skills. Resources in other subjects are adequate and of satisfactory quality. Most are properly stored while remaining accessible to teachers and, in some cases, to pupils. There is not enough equipment for the under-fives but that which is available is of good quality.

52 The school provides sound provision for pupils with special educational needs. However, the headteacher is aware of the need to monitor the system more rigorously. Funding for special educational needs is used appropriately for the release of the co-ordinator and to develop resources.

53 The responsibilities that accompany financial management are taken very seriously by the school and governors. A draft budget is prepared by the headteacher before evaluation by the governors, particularly the finance committee. There is a commitment to high staffing levels which ensures smaller teaching groups and a good pupil/teacher ratio. The priorities identified in the school improvement plan are also considered. Spending is carefully thought through and not just in the short-term. The school has invested heavily in musical instruments and tuition to provide worthwhile experiences for its pupils and raise the profile of music. However, the school has not been subject to a local authority audit since before the last inspection.

54 Although the school's expenditure per pupil is above average, against rising standards and the overall school effectiveness, the school provides sound value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55 The inspection team recognises the school's continued drive to raise standards, but to improve further the standards achieved and the quality of education the headteacher, staff and governors should:

Raise attainment in English, mathematics, science and information technology by:

- Ensuring that work is planned for the range of different ability groups within classes; (paragraphs 7, 15, 87, 95, 102)
- Using assessment information more effectively to inform future planning and monitor pupils' progress; (paragraphs 42, 48, 90)
- Developing language skills consistently through the school; (paragraphs 90, 91)
- Improving the book resources for literature; (paragraph 86)
- Adapting the national guidelines for information technology to the specific needs of the school and use information technology to support work across the curriculum; (paragraph 130)
- Improving the quality of individual education plans so targets are more focused and specific to literacy and numeracy; (paragraph 24)
- Using examples of good teaching to improve the consistency of teaching through the school. (paragraphs 17 and 48)

In addition to the above issues, the following less important matters should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Develop the curriculum for the children under five; (paragraph 63)
- Ensure a daily act of collective worship. (paragraph 32)

THE WORK OF THE LANGUAGE UNIT

56 The Language Unit is a strength of the school. The local education authority funds it for pupils with specific speech disorders and pupils who have difficulties acquiring receptive language skills. Pupils spend two days each week in the Language Unit and the remaining three days in their local mainstream school. Time spent in the Unit is devoted to addressing the specific needs of the pupils, for example, basic language and literacy skills and the acquisition of mathematical concepts. The accommodation is adequate and used well and the children are taught in an attractive, bright learning environment. It contains a good variety of resources, which are of good quality.

57 Good documentation is developed on all pupils in the Unit. They are given tailored made programmes to suit their individual needs and day to day assessment is carried out on each pupil. This is used effectively to inform future teaching and planning. All pupils are monitored well through their individual education plans and regular review meetings. Good support from external agencies is used appropriately as required.

58 Parents of the pupils in the Language Unit speak highly of the school. They are pleased with the provision their children receive and are happy with the good progress they make. A home-school liaison book is developed for each pupil. These are of high quality and contain useful information for parent, carers and the adults who work in the Language Unit.

59 Some of the pupils do not attain national expectations in all subjects of the National Curriculum because of their speech and language difficulties. However the pupils' progress is good and often very good. This is due to the sensitive and very good quality support, which they receive from the teacher and the speech and language therapist in particular, in literacy and language and mathematics. In those aspects which are not directly linked to the National Curriculum but matched to their individual plans, for example, overcoming many of the specific language difficulties and the importance of looking and listening, progress is very good. These high standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

60 Pupils respond appropriately to all activities offered to them. They listen very well to instructions and respond confidently because the adults give constant support to encourage in particular, the reluctant speakers to talk. They develop good relationships with each other and the adults who help them. Behaviour is very good.

61 The quality of teaching for pupils is good and sometimes very good. Pupils are given tasks, which are well matched to their differing abilities. All staff who work with these pupils develop very good relationships showing great sensitivity to the wide range of needs. The management of the pupils is consistently good. The adults have high expectations with regard to the development of looking and listening skills. During language sessions parents' comments in the home-school liaison books are used well to promote speaking and listening skills. Adults consistently give clear instructions for example when explaining how to play games such as 'The Snowball Game', which reinforces accurate listening skills. Both adults in the Language Unit provide very good support for these pupils who have difficulty acquiring basic language skills.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	102
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	56

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	10	33	50	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		348
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		112

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		64

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	74

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	32	19	51

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	26	30
	Girls	15	17	17
	Total	41	43	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	73 (65)	84 (76)	93 (79)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	30	22
	Girls	15	16	15
	Total	41	46	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (74)	90 (78)	73 (74)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	23	16	39

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	[]	19
	Girls	13	[]	13
	Total	27	30	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (67)	69 (56)	82 (71)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	18	20
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	28	30	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (69)	77 (67)	84 (71)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	9
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	35
Pakistani	21
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	2
White	230
Any other minority ethnic group	19

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.8
Average class size	21

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	145

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
	£
Total income	656550
Total expenditure	650019
Expenditure per pupil	1832
Balance brought forward from previous year	5118
Balance carried forward to next year	11649

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	322
Number of questionnaires returned	49

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	32	2	4	2
My child is making good progress in school.	42	50	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	40	6	0	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	35	19	4	6
The teaching is good.	50	42	2	2	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	42	23	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	38	8	8	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	31	4	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	25	38	33	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	34	43	11	6	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	46	0	6	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	56	6	2	2

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

62 Education for children under five is provided in two reception classes. At the time of the inspection approximately 70% of the children in the reception classes were under the age of five. Pre-school experiences are wide and varied. The local authority's baseline assessment is undertaken within the first few weeks of entry to the reception classes. Information from this indicates that attainment on entry to the school is well below average. This is supported by inspection findings.

63 The provision is appropriate for the needs of children under five but the reception classes are in different parts of the school which restricts access to the activities which staff would wish to provide in order to consolidate learning. The curriculum provides a broad and balanced programme of learning experiences suitable for children under five. Teachers and support staff work very effectively as a team promoting sound educational standards. The support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and achievement. The children learn through appropriate teacher-directed activities but there is insufficient opportunity for access to child-chosen structured play activities. The children are consequently unable to develop exploratory and investigative play appropriately and to practise and consolidate their skills effectively. This is having a negative impact on the quality of education for children under five. Children are unable to make use of a secure playground to enjoy wheeled toys to develop their physical skills because of a lack of facility for this play and the absence of a safe surface for climbing apparatus. This inhibits their progress in this area of learning. The school recognises the need to re-organise the provision in order that facilities such as the role-play areas are readily accessible to children in both reception classes.

Personal and social development

64 Many children enter the reception classes with poor social skills for their age. They make good progress in this area of learning, developing self-confidence as they learn to understand and comply with the routines of the school. All children are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. Children take responsibility for their own aprons in creative activities and help one another with zips and fasteners when they put on their own coats for outside play sessions. They collaborate to make a roof for a house with construction apparatus and co-operate well in small world play and in water play as they hold containers steady for a friend to fill with water. They are encouraged to take turns and to share toys and equipment at all times. At the end of a session they tidy up the toys and sweep up the sand. At lunchtime children who bring sandwiches to school or have school meals sit quietly and responsibly, and behave very politely asking for help when needed and showing independence whenever possible with help from pupils from Year 6. Children learn to dress and undress for physical education and to fold their own clothes carefully. Mid-morning snack-time is not well used to develop social skills. Children are not always encouraged to pour their own drinks, hand round the biscuits or to develop personal skills in a shared social setting. Children are, however, always expected to behave politely and to say 'please', and 'thank you'. Teaching of personal and social skills is good, with a consistent approach that enables children to understand the behaviour that is expected in school and to make good progress.

Language and literacy

65 The majority of the children have oral language skills that are poorly developed for their age when they enter the reception classes. Many children display very immature speech patterns and several are unable to communicate effectively with adults. A few children have poor skills in both speaking and listening. The development of children's early language skills is unsatisfactory. Children's language skills are developed through role-play, stories and rhymes, and play activities and creative work with an adult, but there is insufficient focus on the development of oracy within activities for the necessary progress to be made. Activities are often provided, with little or no appropriate adult intervention to ensure learning is taking place, and too frequently language is not used as a medium for learning. In role-play children communicate freely in the home corner but speech patterns are poor, with very little interaction and there is often insufficient adult intervention within the play to develop language effectively. Children listen to stories attentively and they enjoy songs and rhymes. A few children are able to recite short nursery rhymes without adult support. When children are given good models of language they model their use of language very effectively on that of the teacher and make good progress. This was seen in the literacy hour when children were delighted to practise new vocabulary of e.g. 'waddle' from the Big Book. Emergent writing is not always incorporated into role-play effectively and few children use writing independently. The children have access to an appropriate range of books in the reading areas but they are not encouraged to sit quietly and enjoy a story for themselves from a familiar book. Many children are clearly unfamiliar with books when they enter the reception class. By the time they are five years old more able children in reception handle books well and with confidence and most are able to differentiate between pictures and text. Many children are able to recognise several letters of the alphabet by sound and shape and higher attaining children can relate these sounds to words and a few are beginning to read. Most children in reception form letters of the alphabet correctly and a few higher attainers are able to write whole words unaided.

66 Attainment in language and literacy overall is below the desirable learning outcomes for five year olds and the use of spoken English is particularly poor. The teaching of language and literacy for children under five has strengths, particularly in the literacy hour. However, there are also some shortcomings. Although the teaching of reading and writing is effective there is insufficient emphasis on the development of speaking skills and the children's progress in this area is unsatisfactory.

Mathematics

67 Children attain levels in mathematics, which are below those of most five-year-olds. Skills and understanding are developed through sorting and matching activities, for example matching utensils in the home corner, within sand and water play, activities using shape, position, size, and quantity, and through songs and rhymes. Children sequence patterns of two colours and explain their reasoning with understanding. They practise sequencing and pattern making in bead threading and painting activities, and enjoy counting forwards and backwards using songs and rhymes to support learning. Many children are unable to count beyond three when they enter the reception class. By the time they are five most children count to ten with confidence and many are able to indicate how many more they need to make, for example, 5 if they already have 3. A significant minority of children cannot, however, confidently recognise the numerals to 5 and even higher attaining pupils are not confident in the use of mathematical language such as longer/shorter and more/less. Children make satisfactory progress in mathematical skills.

68 Teaching, although generally sound, allows too few opportunities for practical work and teachers do not always take opportunities to engage children in discussion in order to ensure full understanding and to reinforce mathematical language. Independent tasks are not always matched appropriately to the needs of children, particularly those of higher attainment.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

69 Children's knowledge and understanding of the world are developing appropriately although they attain levels that are below those of most children of their age. Opportunities are provided for children to develop technological skills through their use of construction toys during play activities with both large and small apparatus. Children choose their own materials and cut their own fabrics as they create windows, doors and roofs for houses they are making within their project on 'homes'. As they become more familiar with computers children under five are developing early skills with the mouse and they enjoy dressing Humpty Dumpty as they learn to drag icons across the screen with increasing accuracy. Children make sound progress in this area of learning with effective teaching and a clear focus for learning through topic work.

Creative development

70 Children attain levels in most areas of creative work, which are typical for their age. Children's creative and artistic skills are developing appropriately and are evident in the bright displays of work and in the confidence with which the children select and use materials. They use clay effectively to create slab work of leaf prints and use a variety of materials in collage work of glistening spiders' webs to accompany a papier-mâché spider. They use water colour to good effect to create trees in winter, using sticks as tools to paint in cold colours of blue and grey. Children use paints, crayons, and pencils to good effect, creating their own self-portraits, and their free painting displays an abundance of brilliant colour and enjoyment. Musical expertise is developing well. Children listen attentively and enjoy singing together with percussion accompaniment, although they display more enthusiasm at this stage than skill. Children develop skills well as they clap a variety of rhythms and follow and imitate a number of name patterns on tambourine and drum. Teaching is sound with secure subject knowledge of the creative arts although work is sometimes over-directed by the teacher with more emphasis on the finished product than on the enjoyment of the creative experience.

Physical development

71 The children's physical development is generally satisfactory for their age. Access to outdoor play in a secure play area with an appropriate range of equipment is not, however, available to the children. Although staff try to provide opportunities for the children to develop skills with climbing apparatus, wheeled toys, and the development of co-operative play within a restricted environment indoors this is inappropriate and it is ineffective in meeting the children's needs. Children use space effectively, however, in lessons in the hall with good avoidance techniques and sound control of their own bodies. Many children can run, jump, hop, and balance confidently showing a good use of space and a good awareness of the proximity of others. The teaching of many aspects of physical development is good with a clear focus for learning and direct teaching of skills such as throwing and catching. Teachers make good use of demonstration in lessons together with space for individual exploration and children make good progress. Children make sound progress in the skills of cutting, gluing, drawing and colouring. Many children have poor control when they enter the reception class but they learn to use scissors with competence and a few are able to cut out quite complex pictures, for example from old catalogues or magazines, and to cut fabric for curtains for the windows of their house. By the time they are five years old most children can manipulate a mouse with a high degree of accuracy in information technology and are able to draw a computer generated picture of a house. Children are developing dexterity as they manipulate laces in and out of holes, and use stencils to create pictures, which, for higher attainers, include even the spokes in the bicycle wheels.

ENGLISH

72 Standards in English are below national averages at the end of Key Stage 1. This represents an improvement in standards in reading since the 1999 National Curriculum tests and tasks when attainment was found to be well below the national average. Standards in writing observed in Key Stage 1 broadly reflect those achieved by pupils in the 1999 tests and are below national averages.

Pupils' attainment in both the reading and writing tests was below that of pupils from similar backgrounds.

73 Taking the test results of the last four years into account, attainment is well below the national average; however, the overall trend is one of slowly improving standards. Findings from inspection show the positive impact of the national literacy strategy particularly on improvements in reading in Key Stage 1.

74 By the end of Key Stage 2 the standards of pupils in English are below the national average. This is similar to standards seen in the 1999 National Curriculum tests. The trend over the last four years has been one of improvement in test scores and those achieved in 1999 were very close to the national average. Attainment in these tests is close to the average for pupils from similar backgrounds.

75 In the national tests both girls' and boys' standards are improving although girls generally do better than boys. However, taking the last four years into consideration, boys' scores in writing tests at Key Stage 1 are better than girls'. During the inspection in Key Stage 1, younger girls' abilities in speaking and listening were less well developed than the boys.

76 Pupils' attainment in speaking and listening at the end of Key Stage 1 is below the national average. In the 1999 teacher assessments, pupils were judged to be achieving standards well below national averages, although the number of pupils achieving higher standards was in line with national averages. Although generally this reflects the findings of the inspection, the number of pupils attaining higher levels in speaking and listening was below national averages.

77 Many younger pupils are very reticent and unwilling to speak in front of the whole class. In a lesson observed in Year 1 although a few boys gave responses to teacher's questions, many of the girls and some of the boys were very unwilling to participate. Clearly, pupils make satisfactory progress in speaking and listening, and towards the end of Key Stage 1 the more able pupils speak confidently when expressing their opinions in class discussions. Most older pupils can converse using short sentences but their vocabulary is often limited. They talk to their friends and try hard when answering teachers' questions. They listen carefully to stories and instructions.

78 Achievement in speaking and listening is satisfactory at Key Stage 2 and by the end of Key Stage 2, although many pupils' vocabulary is still limited, most pupils have sufficient confidence to speak in front of larger groups such as the whole class. However, many pupils struggle to express their ideas precisely and find it difficult to explain what they have understood. The more capable pupils are able to express their ideas clearly. Pupils listen well to each other and to adults.

79 By the end of Key Stage 1 standards in reading are just below national averages. At the end of the key stage, many pupils are able to read straightforward texts with expression and confidence. Most pupils are acquiring a good range of strategies for tackling unknown words. They understand how to find books in their key stage library and are able to use the contents and index of reference books to find information. Progress in reading is good throughout Key Stage 1.

80 This good progress is maintained for the younger pupils at Key Stage 2 and by the end of the key stage standards in reading are just below national averages. The more able pupils read reasonably demanding text with fluency and are able to discuss the content of the book they are reading. They are not so adept at identifying overall themes in the books they are reading or making links with other books they have encountered. Most pupils understand how to use the library for independent research and use information books efficiently.

81 Standards of writing are below the national average at the end of the Key Stage 1. The older, more able pupils write simple stories and factual pieces. Their spelling of common words is usually accurate and work is correctly punctuated. Although many pupils can construct simple sentences, they use a very limited vocabulary, work is often repetitive and spelling inaccurate. As they move through the key stage many pupils develop a more confident approach to their writing, they learn to use spelling prompts such as simple dictionaries. In Year 2, the more able use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them when writing, although some pupils need reminding to do this. Pupils are working towards acquiring a joined style of handwriting, and generally making reasonable progress towards acquiring a legible and fluent style.

82 By the end of Key Stage 2 standards in writing are just below the national average. Presentation of work and handwriting continue to improve as pupils move through the key stage. By Year 6 the more able pupils have a good understanding of how to write narrative, factual pieces and poetry. They produce work that is interesting and accurate and are beginning to use language with increasing precision. They understand how to plan their work and the need to redraft and develop their writing. However, many pupils are constrained by their limited vocabulary and although they enjoy and benefit from studying extracts from children's literature in the literacy hour, they still need a high level of support when composing their own pieces. Achievement in writing improves in Years 5 and 6.

83 In Years 3 and 4 progress is frequently not as fast as it could be particularly for the more able pupils, as work set does not always challenge them sufficiently. For example, in a lesson observed in Year 3 pupils were required to devise an outline of a fable by cutting and sticking a series of statements. This benefited the less able pupils because it gave them time to read and consider what they would do. However, the more able pupils did not need such a time consuming exercise and could have quite easily moved onto drafting their stories independently. Sometimes all the pupils in a class are given the same activity that then is too difficult for some pupils and too easy for others.

84 Overall the quality of teaching is good although instances of weaker teaching were observed during the inspection at both key stages. The quality of teaching for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is consistently high, with examples of very good and excellent teaching being observed for the older pupils. A positive feature of many lessons is that teachers always ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to achieve in the forthcoming lesson.

85 The most effective lessons are characterised by a high level of subject expertise and understanding of how the requirements of the literacy strategy can best be used to promote pupils' progress in reading and writing. In an excellent lesson observed at Year 6 pupils made considerable progress in their understanding of the story *The Mousehole Cat* by their shared reading of the text. Through skilful questioning and direction of discussion the teacher motivated the pupils to do their very best and their understanding of key elements in the language of the text was heightened. Pupils were able to say why the language was effective, to identify the impact of the figurative language and later to use it in their own writing. They were given opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of each other's writing and discuss how it might be improved. In Years 5 and 6 good use is made of additional literacy sessions where pupils are given the opportunity to consolidate their understanding of grammatical structures and spelling conventions and rules. Most planning of lessons is thorough and classrooms are usually organised carefully, although in one Year 1 writing lesson some pupils were slowed down because they could not see the 'word bank' clearly from where they were sitting. Teachers give pupils ready access to dictionaries and other spelling prompts although more language prompts could be displayed that would promote pupils' independence when writing. In a very good lesson taught by two teachers in Year 6, the role of each teacher was very carefully planned and both teachers had very positive relationships with pupils. Pupils had been motivated by earlier interesting homework tasks. At the beginning of the session the pupils found it difficult to explain their understanding in full sentences, but the teachers' insistence on clear and detailed answers paid off

and, as their lesson progressed, the pupils' confidence and skill in answering increased. They were able to transfer this later to their written work. The lesson was further enhanced by independent group activities that challenged these pupils, for example, identifying how the author built tension into his writing. They found this difficult but by skilful questioning and shared reading pupils were enabled to have better understanding of what they were reading.

86 The teaching of reading at Key Stage 1 is very systematic and within the literacy hour teachers ensure that pupils increase their understanding of sounds and word patterns. This is having a positive impact on pupils' skills in reading. By Year 2 pupils have been thoroughly taught how to use sounds and the surrounding text to enable them to tackle unknown words with confidence and to read fluently. Detailed records of pupils' progress in reading are conscientiously maintained. The teaching of reading in Key Stage 2 is not so systematic. Although teachers use the literacy hour to raise pupils' awareness of literature and to consider the components of effective writing, the full texts from which extracts are taken are not always readily available for the pupils to read independently should they wish to. Teachers monitor pupils' independent reading conscientiously but most classrooms are poorly resourced with good children's literature. Thus it is difficult for teachers to ensure that pupils are always reading across a wide range of literature. All teachers make effective use of the shared group reading time in the literacy hour and they keep careful records of pupils' participation in group reading.

87 Where teaching is weaker it is because lesson planning has not provided for activities to match all pupils' prior attainment. This is particularly the case for the higher attaining pupils within lessons. A lack of challenge in the questioning and many of the activities means that pupils are not motivated to work hard or give of their best. Sometimes independent activities do little to promote new learning and the pupils are bored by undertaking repetitive written exercises that are well within their capabilities. The quality of marking in English is variable, all teachers acknowledge that work has been checked, many make corrections to grammatical and spelling errors, but very few examples are seen of advice to enable further learning or the setting of individual targets.

88 Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils and they receive good quality additional support where this is required. Provision for the pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and enables them to make satisfactory progress against the targets in their individual education plans.

89 The literacy hour has been organised effectively and its implementation is properly monitored by the headteacher and literacy co-ordinator. Teachers plan their work in year groups and this helps to promote consistency between classes. The National Literacy Strategy is having a good impact on raising standards particularly in reading at Key Stage 1 and in writing for the older pupils at Key Stage 2.

90 The management of the subject is led by the literacy co-ordinator who is well supported by a literacy working party, which ensures that literacy is monitored and supported effectively throughout the school. There are two library areas within the school; both are bright and well furnished but stocks of books are insufficient. Each classroom has a collection of books for pupils to borrow but in most classrooms these books are few in number and not organised or displayed to stimulate pupils' interest. The curriculum is based on the requirements of the literacy strategy and supplemented by a useful scheme of work for speaking and listening. At Key Stage 1 much effort is made by teachers to promote early independence in writing, but there is no written policy that ensures a uniformity of practice between classes. The headteacher and literacy co-ordinator monitor standards of teaching and planning. This is supported by the local authority adviser and is effective in identifying where teachers need support. There are detailed procedures in place to assess pupils' attainment and rates of progress but as yet little use is made of this information to identify patterns of learning or to set pupils further targets for improvement.

91 The school has made satisfactory progress in improving provision since the previous inspection. A more effective approach to reading has been introduced at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2 the quality of provision has benefited considerably from the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. These initiatives have had a reasonable impact on standards throughout the school. This is particularly the case in reading for the Key Stage 1 and younger pupils at Key Stage 2 and for the standard of writing towards the end of Key Stage 2. However, there is still a need to ensure that the improving literacy skills of pupils at Key Stage 2 are transferred to their independent reading and that the pace of progress in writing increases for the younger pupils in Key Stage 2.

MATHEMATICS

92 The results of national tests in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 2 show that pupils were achieving standards that were in line with the national average. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when results were well below average. Over the last four years, the gap between school and national results has closed and, in comparison with similar schools, standards were above average in 1999. A similar picture emerges in Key Stage 1. Results of tests in 1999 were close to the national average compared with below average standards at the last inspection. Over four years there has been steady improvement and, in comparison with similar schools, results in 1999 were above average. In both key stages, in particular years, there have been differences in the attainment of boys and girls but there is no consistent trend. In 1999, for example, in both key stages, boys and girls were performing at close to the national average. Teachers have a wealth of information derived from test results. They are not yet adept at analysing them sufficiently well to develop strategies to improve provision and so raise attainment for particular pupils or groups of pupils should the need arise.

93 The work seen in Year 2 indicates that average standards are being achieved by the majority of pupils. Working with numbers up to 100, they can count in twos and tens and mentally work out numbers that are more than, or less than, a given figure. All but the lowest attainers are beginning to understand tens and units. Many can recognise patterns in number and complete a sequence correctly. The more able pupils select the correct equipment for measuring length but, for most pupils, there are not enough opportunities to use or apply their knowledge to solve problems. Most pupils recognise common shapes correctly, tell the time accurately using 'o'clock' and 'half-past' and recognise simple symmetrical shapes. They know how to construct a graph from information that they gather, for example, about the favourite colour in the class. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress. Year 1 pupils, for example, are working with numbers up to 20 and beginning to recognise whether they are odd or even. They use spans or cubes to measure objects and the more able pupils are beginning to use centimetres correctly. Common two-dimensional shapes are recognised by most pupils and many can draw a block graph from information that is given to them. There are therefore satisfactory gains in knowledge and understanding by the time pupils reach seven.

94 Pupils in Year 6 are currently working at below average levels. The school has recognised that this cohort may not be as successful in the end of year National Curriculum test compared with 1999 and has set an appropriate target for their attainment. The year group contains a higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs and the school's target is correctly based on pupils' standardised test results at the end of Year 5. Nevertheless, challenging work is being set in Year 6 and, because of good and very good teaching in three different ability classes, pupils are generally making good progress. The more able pupils have secure understanding of the four rules of number and use ordinary and scientific calculators to discover the function of brackets in calculations. They apply their knowledge to solve a problem posed when a calculator's addition button begins to multiply numbers. Pupils of average attainment use their understanding of doubling and halving to solve problems involving the multiplication of large numbers such as 42×50 . They find it difficult, however, to explain their strategies. Lower attainers work mainly with the four rules

of number using figures up to 100. They list the factors of 25 and 18 and solve worded problems involving addition. Work in other aspects of mathematics besides number is satisfactory and there are reasonable opportunities for them to use and apply their mathematical understanding to solve problems. Pupils throughout the key stage are making sound progress in their ability to solve calculations mentally and all lessons correctly begin with some mental exercises. Number work too develops steadily from Year 3. Pupils there work with the 2,5, and 10 times tables and with addition and multiplication of tens and units. By Year 5 pupils are working with decimals and equivalent fractions. By Year 5 too, pupils are familiar with the properties of different triangles and tell the time using analogue and digital references. They produce line graphs and can interpret them. Progress across the years is therefore satisfactory for all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs. By Year 6, the attainment of pupils who do not have English as their first language is similar to the majority.

95 Teaching in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall and in Key Stage 2 it is good. In Years 5 and 6, teaching is particularly good. Half the lessons seen there were very good. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen in Key Stage 1. This was caused by the teacher talking for the whole lesson. No opportunity was given for pupils to practise what they were learning through an activity. The content of the lesson was also too difficult for most of them to understand. In contrast, a small number of Year 2 pupils were given work that was too easy and they filled up their time by colouring in their worksheet. This seriously affected their pace of learning. While most teachers plan work that is generally appropriate for their pupils, very few plan different work for the various ability groups within their classes. Even though classes are sorted by ability, pupils within them need different work according to the level of understanding that they have reached. The more able pupils, in particular, need challenging work to ensure that they are not coasting.

96 A feature of the good and very good lessons is the ability of teachers to motivate pupils so that they develop a fascination with numbers and a desire to solve problems for themselves. They do this by conveying their own enthusiasm, by taking lessons at a brisk pace and by having high expectations that pupils can cope with challenging work. They share the learning intention of the lesson with the pupils and return to it in the plenary to assess whether it has been achieved. In a Year 3 lesson, lower attaining pupils were involved in their own learning because the teacher explained clearly what the task was. Pupils were then able to concentrate on that task and arrive at a suitable strategy for adding four numbers. The majority of teachers are good at teaching basic skills of number and use the structure of the 'Numeracy Hour' to deliver their lessons effectively, using appropriate resources. Homework, particularly in Key Stage 2, is regularly set and is properly used to reinforce what is learned in the classroom. Teachers mark work regularly but not all are as thorough as the majority. In one book, for example, a child's continuous reversal when writing the figure '3' was not corrected. In lessons, however, teachers assess continuously as they work with individuals or groups and this helps pupils to understand how they can improve. Teachers have good control of their classes and relationships are positive. A teacher in Year 6 feels it is important to make maths 'fun' and her pupils respond warmly to this approach.

97 Pupils respond well in most lessons. They behave sensibly, concentrate on their work and produce a reasonable volume of work that is usually neat. Only when work is too easy or too hard does their interest wane. They are keen to answer questions. They are delighted when they are chosen to explain something for the rest of the class as in a Year 5 lesson when a pupil demonstrated an operation on the calculator that was relayed through the overhead projector on to the screen. The ability of teachers to maintain this high level of interest has a positive effect on pupils' learning.

98 The school was chosen to pilot the introduction of the Numeracy Strategy and the daily Numeracy Hour is now well established. The Framework is properly used to form the basis of weekly plans that are thorough and detailed. The co-ordinator, together with senior members of staff, has been instrumental in introducing the Numeracy Strategy and in supporting teachers and now monitors

the delivery of the curriculum through a scrutiny of books and plans and occasional lesson observations. Feedback is usually oral but some forceful notes for specific teachers have been written following a book trawl. The co-ordinator is aware that teachers need further help with providing problem-solving activities and has plans to address this. She ensures that there are adequate resources to deliver the curriculum.

99 Pupils' attainment is assessed throughout the year by means of regular tests that check on learning after a particular block of work. Standardised tests are given at the end of Years 3,4 and 5 and national tests are properly administered at seven and eleven. Each pupil is assessed regularly against the key learning objectives in the Numeracy Framework, though these have to be reviewed and brought up-to-date. This variety of assessment tools enables teachers to judge attainment in a satisfactory way and to pass on accurate information to the next teacher.

SCIENCE

100 Standards are below average by the end of both key stages. In the latest National Curriculum test, results were close to the national average and above average in relation to similar schools at Key Stage 2, but teacher assessments for Key Stage 1 were well below average. Inspection findings support Key Stage 1 results and also identify below average standards at Key Stage 2 in the current Year 6 group. Although pupils' understanding has shown improvement since the last inspection there remain weaknesses in key areas of investigating and applying science. However, standards are rising steadily year by year.

101 Pupils' knowledge of the science topics studied is generally satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 2, although their recall of previous work is sometimes inadequate, as in Year 5 where many pupils cannot recall how to make a circuit containing a switch. During the inspection Year 6 pupils acquired knowledge about the major organs of the human body and their functions while Year 4 learnt the essential features of a healthy diet. Pupils regularly use simple graphs and make relevant measurements within their science work such as when testing the permeability of rocks in Year 6. They also use charts and tables to record results, although these are often very simple as in Year 3 where they involve a yes/no observation for materials reflecting light well. Pupils do undertake regular practical work, and Year 6 pupils readily predict outcomes, but understanding of fair testing is less secure and many pupils find it difficult to explain, generalise and draw conclusions from results. Pupils throughout the school often struggle to use relevant technical vocabulary even when they are aware of the scientific principles they observe. At Key Stage 1 pupils' recorded knowledge is often superficial, with pupils only writing basic facts on worksheets in many lessons, or completing drawing or cutting and sticking activities.

102 As at the time of the last inspection, pupils are generally satisfactorily taught, although one lesson had shortcomings. Lesson planning has many strengths, particularly the clear objectives which are shared with pupils, but also significant weaknesses especially at Key Stage 1. While work regularly incorporates numerical and graphical recording and relevant, useful homework tasks, the amount of work set and activities undertaken are too often limited for younger pupils, resulting in too little effort being required by pupils. Moreover, all pupils, even where year groups are organised into ability sets, frequently complete the same work irrespective of differing rates of learning. In some lessons this leads to teachers having to modify the work during a lesson. Teachers generally introduce work clearly, involving pupils well by enabling them to raise queries which help them to clarify thoughts and by pertinent questioning which checks on their understanding but does not always ensure they explain their reasoning. They organise activities effectively which sets pupils, who all enjoy practical work and engage in it enthusiastically, to work productively as in Year 1 where they recorded sources of light. However, such activities sometimes go on too long and are conducted with insufficient urgency. Plenary sessions following them sometimes fail to engage pupils in mental effort, or some pupils do not satisfactorily summarise scientific principles because of loss of

concentration. Higher attaining pupils who quickly grasp new work are seldom challenged further. At best, though, as in Year 5 work on electricity, open-ended investigative activities enable pupils to apply previous learning, share ideas and discover as a group how resistors work. In such circumstances, though, boys often dominate the practical work. Over the long term, all pupils, including those with special educational needs acquire knowledge and skills at a steady rate.

103 Although the scheme of work provides a sound basis for covering the National Curriculum programmes of study across the knowledge components there are elements included which are not required by primary pupils. It does not progressively develop the full range of investigative skills. There is a heavy reliance on published worksheets. Timetabled sessions for some classes are not conducive to effective learning, often being too long in Key Stage 1 and sometimes fragmented in Key Stage 2. Although teachers' planning and samples of work are monitored there has been no opportunity for best practice to be shared to enable less confident teachers to become more skilful.

ART

104 Achievements in art are good throughout the school. Since the last inspection a high standard has been maintained at Key Stage 2, with some improvement at Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 1, after studying the work of Paul Klee, pupils carefully develop their own artwork using paint and wax resist techniques. In Year 1, pupils show good awareness of basic observational drawing skills as they work on drawing faces. They later make faces out of clay. Pupils enthusiastically create textured, patterned pictures of fantasy animals such as dragons. They use a variety of techniques and materials. Most begin to use specific art-related vocabulary correctly such as 'pattern' and 'texture'. They produce sound imaginative artwork showing careful colouring skills. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils create interesting collages of 'angels' which planning shows will later be developed into mobiles. They select, cut and join materials by sewing them together to make finger puppets and articulate well what they have done. Most pupils produce sound imaginative artwork showing careful painting skills.

105 Pupils in Year 3 continue to develop observational drawing and shading skills as they draw bicycle wheels. They experiment with charcoal and pastels and carefully draw their friends. This is developed further when in Year 4 they sketch and paint faces. Pupils study poppy heads and make 'poppy head' clay pots. Colourful and interesting three-dimensional profiles are created using the work of Pablo Picasso as a stimulus. Pupils in Year 5 weave strips of paper, which creates intricate artwork that tricks the eye. They look at the work of J M W Turner and develop attractive and detailed watercolour landscapes. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils study the work of Georgia O'Keeffe and Andy Warhol and link their artwork to the work of these artists. Pupils work well using a wide range of materials, tools and techniques. They show increasing attention to detail when drawing and painting. Most pupils develop a sound understanding of the work of different artists.

106 Pupils' response to lessons is good. They enjoy art and are interested and involved. Pupils listen carefully, answer questions sensibly and most settle quickly to the tasks set. They develop good relationships with each other and the majority are able to concentrate for appropriate amounts of time and talk enthusiastically about what they have learned. Most pupils work with satisfactory independence.

107 Throughout the school displays of paintings, printings, pottery, and three-dimensional art create an attractive visual environment and clearly demonstrate the good progress made. The teaching of art is good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Planning for lessons is good and lessons are well resourced, however opportunities for assessment are not systematic throughout. Teachers and classroom assistants interact well within groups and give good supportive and helpful comments to the

pupils. Some teachers give pupils opportunities to evaluate their artwork and the work of others.

108 There is a comprehensive policy for art which guides teachers very well and ensures the progressive teaching of skills knowledge and understanding in art. The co-ordinator is aware that there is little use of information technology to support the art curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to use their art skills in other subjects such as in English, history, and mathematics. Older pupils have the opportunity to join the art club after school. All pupils have the opportunity to work in clay, and pupils in Key Stage 2 develop the use of sketchbooks. The art curriculum is enriched by visits to the Barber Institute and the Tate Gallery. The school has developed an art gallery in the area outside the hall. It shows pupils' work displayed in an attractive and stimulating way. The examples show a large variety of techniques, presented in a mature and exciting environment.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109 No lessons were observed during the inspection. Judgements are therefore based on additional information such as scrutiny of wall displays, and discussions with teachers and pupils. There is little evidence from past work to make secure judgements on pupils' achievements at Key Stage 1. However, the limited evidence such as the design of a vehicle with wheels and axles which was completed by pupils in Year 2 and the discussions with pupils, suggests that standards are satisfactory.

110 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have made satisfactory progress and show competence in basic design and technology skills. In Year 6, pupils learn about food technology and develop a sound understanding of how different ways of cooking affects the taste of food. They confidently talk about designing meals. Pupils in Year 5 design and make musical instruments. They learn about different structures and show ways of making their structures stronger by using skills previously taught. Pupils are involved in practical and investigative tasks, which develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of simple mechanisms such as designing a moving walkway in Year 4. Pupils in Year 3 investigate boxes and then create their own designs. All pupils develop basic evaluation skills and articulate what they have done with confidence.

111 Pupils show enthusiasm when talking about what they have designed and made in lessons. They confidently name tools and materials they have used and explain techniques they have learned, for example how to join wood together.

112 The co-ordinator has only recently been appointed and the school has recently adopted a new policy, which gives clear guidance to teachers. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is no agreed approach to assessment. There is an appropriate range of resources, which are stored on two trolleys. There has been no recent audit of these resources. Well-presented displays of work around the school reinforce the skills taught in design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

113 It was not possible to observe the teaching of geography during the period of inspection due to the position of the subject in the termly curriculum cycle. However, previous pupils' work was examined thoroughly, teachers' planning was scrutinised and interviews were held with a sample of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils in order to form accurate judgements.

114 Generally, pupils achieve satisfactorily throughout the school, acquiring appropriate geographic skills, knowledge and understanding. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have a good understanding of maps. They follow a simple route through the forest taken by Goldilocks and describe physical and human features on the journey, naming rivers, roads, bridges and farms. The

majority of pupils know the constituent countries of the United Kingdom, the more able pupils locating each one accurately on a blank map. Pupils have a sound knowledge of weather and use appropriate symbols to illustrate the different weather patterns.

115 At the end of Key Stage 2 all pupils have a basic knowledge of the world map. More able pupils readily identify continents and oceans on a world map. The majority of pupils can read an A to Z map using the symbols accurately to interpret features and locate places using co-ordinates. The recent visit to Woodgate Valley has enabled pupils to have a clear understanding of river processes. Correct terms are used to describe features such as tributaries, meander, waterfall, source and estuary. Lower attaining pupils have some understanding of the damage done to the environment by litter and oil pollution. The more able pupils have more detailed understanding of the effects of fuel emissions on the atmosphere and the development of global warming. Research skills are moderately developed. Lower attaining pupils find it difficult to use an atlas index, whereas more able pupils are more skilful and confident in their approach to locating places in an atlas.

116 The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The role of the co-ordinator has improved and now encompasses monitoring of the curriculum and review of pupils' work, and includes a targeted development plan, which is designed to improve pupil performance. Curriculum planning has been implemented successfully and a consistent approach throughout the school now exists. Learning resources were described as very good and accessible in the last report; however, this is not the case currently. Little expenditure on geography has been made recently, making resources only satisfactory. Some materials, such as atlases, are stored centrally and are not readily available for pupils to use.

117 Judging by pupils' previous work and interviews with pupils, learning is satisfactory. Pupils produce an appropriate amount of work in their exercise books and show interest and enthusiasm for learning. Attitudes are generally positive.

118 The school provides a good, well-balanced geography curriculum which is relevant to pupils' experiences and covers a breadth of opportunities for pupils to improve.

119 Literacy and numeracy skills are well integrated into the curriculum, as demonstrated by the accurate use of co-ordinates and the imaginative written work in Year 6 on the journey of a river. Visits to places of local interest, form the basis of focused studies. These are important elements of the geography curriculum. The study of Woodgate Valley and the village of Arley are good examples of visits enlivening a topic and developing first hand experience. A European link with Italian and Danish schools has extended pupils' understanding of contrasting places and enhanced the cultural perspective for the whole school.

120 Although teachers undertake informal class assessment, the school assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress in geography are unsatisfactory. No structured system exists to gauge the progress made by pupils as they move through the school. Pupils' information technology skills are underdeveloped in geography. Too few opportunities exist for the pupils to apply their capability in lessons or to research topics. Teachers' termly planning is thorough but evidence from the scrutiny of work indicates that too little attention is given to providing matched and challenging tasks for pupils of differing attainments. As a result, some more able pupils do not reach their full potential and some lower attaining pupils find it difficult to complete whole-class set tasks

HISTORY

121 Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound achievement in history throughout the school. They are developing skills, knowledge and understanding satisfactorily across a range of historical studies. The pupils' concept of chronology, which relates to events within the

passage of time, is particularly well developed by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in history. They are supported effectively in the classroom by teachers and additional staff. This enables pupils to contribute fully in lessons.

122 At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have gained a sound insight into seventeenth century life through acquiring factual information about the plague. They are aware that the disease was carried by rats and that townspeople isolated themselves in their houses in an attempt to avoid infection. Pupils begin to see the significance of the rhyme “A ring a ring a roses” as a reflection of peoples’ concern about the symptoms of the plague.

123 At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have developed a sound knowledge and depth of historical knowledge and understanding of Ancient Egypt. They write knowledgeably about Egyptian gods, sequence the mummification process and answer questions competently about the building of a pyramid. They build up skills of enquiry through the use of secondary sources such as books, artefacts and photographs.

124 The provision for history has improved since the last inspection. The scheme of work has been fully implemented and the role of the co-ordinator in developing and monitoring the subject has had a beneficial effect on the standard of teaching.

125 Teaching is generally good across both key stages. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and deliver lessons in a stimulating style, such as using role play to enhance pupils’ understanding of the Victorian classroom as in Year 5. They manage classes well and ensure that pupils are well behaved, attentive and concentrate on tasks. The basic skills are taught well. The importance of accurate punctuation and spelling are reinforced frequently and effectively in order to maintain and improve standards of literacy. Lessons are well planned. Clear lesson objectives are set out in written planning documents and these are often shared with pupils, giving them a clear understanding of what is to be achieved in the lesson. Learning resources are generally used effectively to deepen understanding and extend pupils’ knowledge. This is demonstrated in Year 1, where the use of photographs to represent a range of age groups aids pupils’ perception of the changes in the passage of time. During lessons, pupils’ work is informally monitored. Advice and encouragement is given as teachers move around the room. Marking of work is completed frequently, but teachers do not always give individual pupils sufficient instruction as to how their work might be improved further. Some teachers, particularly in Key Stage 1, allocate too much time to description and discussion and as a result pupils become disinterested and their concentration wanes. When tasks are challenging and well matched to pupils’ ability levels, lessons are successful and pupils learn at an appropriate pace. In some lessons however, a single whole-class activity fails to provide an appropriate challenge to all pupils and there is a loss of interest because the work is either too difficult or too easy. Pupils’ work is generally well presented and an appropriate volume of work is completed in the time available. Generally, pupils have positive attitudes and behaviour is good in lessons.

126 The school has a good scheme of work in place. It covers the major National Curriculum study units effectively, giving the pupils a broad and balanced curriculum. The termly collaborative planning and the progressive nature of the scheme of work ensure that pupils make consistent progress throughout the school. The role of the co-ordinator in monitoring, developing and reviewing the subject also has a positive impact on the standards achieved by pupils.

127 Visits to places of interest such as Shugborough Hall and the use of historical artefacts are particularly successful in stimulating pupils’ interest and channelling that enthusiasm into further study.

128 The allocation of time for history within the curriculum is appropriate but some lessons are overlong and pupils’ interest begins to wane and the quality of work declines. Some pilot assessment

of pupils' work has begun in Key Stage 2 but further development is required to establish a whole-school system which monitors progress effectively.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

129 Standards are below national expectations at both key stages, although achievement in individual lessons is usually in line with national targets. Pupils have sound basic skills in logging on and off the computer, using relevant menus and icons to access programs and responding to commands that appear on screens. Year 6 pupils trace written instructions to add new slides to their multimedia presentations and Year 2 pupils follow demonstrations to create pictures using a graphics program. Pupils throughout the school have appropriate skills in word processing, learning to change fonts, sizes and styles for given purposes. However, there are weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and skills across the whole information technology curriculum, particularly in controlling equipment and interrogating and interpreting data. Pupils have little experience of comparing using information technology with other methods, and in most classes pupils rarely use information technology to support work across the curriculum.

130 Although information technology was stated to be a strength of the school at the time of the last inspection, comparisons with the current situation are not entirely appropriate because of changes in equipment and in the curriculum. New machines and the adoption of a different scheme of work have affected outcomes. However, because the school fails to ensure that pupils have regular access to computers throughout the week, and not just during a weekly lesson, progress has not been maintained. Moreover, the newly adopted national scheme of work was introduced without transitional arrangements so that year groups have not covered all the work required by some of the new topics.

131 Given many teachers' lack of confidence with the subject and the equipment, it is to their credit that all lessons are soundly taught. Demonstrations and instructions are clear and provide useful introductions. Teachers work effectively with each other or classroom assistants to do this and ensure pupils receive timely help or guidance including supporting pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language, so that they can continue to sustain effort and concentration. This is often in response to pupils' own requests for assistance when they know they are unable to proceed, but also because adults are alert to pupils' confidence with computers. In the best lessons, such interventions include further challenge for more able pupils such as the Year 3 pupil who learned to edit messages before e-mailing them. While all interventions are supportive, there is sometimes a lack of consistency in whether the adult just demonstrates or helps the pupil to work out what to do. Because most pupils are eager to be independent, much practice is done in lessons, such as Year 4 who explored many options on their decision trees. Good behaviour in cramped and uncomfortable conditions has a positive effect on learning. Although most teachers usefully judge the work covered against the lesson objectives, not all pupils concentrate during these sessions, nor do all pupils readily accept a supporting role when they are paired. Overall progress against the lesson objectives is sound for all pupils.

132 The information technology suite is overcrowded when the average class is using it, and because it does not have direct ventilation it often becomes hot and stuffy. There are many periods during the week when it is not in use. While a useful start has been made on saving pupils' work electronically over the long term, this is not regularly monitored to ensure all pupils are doing enough work and progressing satisfactorily during the week as well as in set lessons.

MUSIC

133 Since the last inspection, pupils' learning has continued to be satisfactory and provision has been improved by the inclusion of stringed instrument lessons and the formation of an orchestra

containing an impressive number of pupils. Resources too have improved and there are now sufficient tuned instruments with a particularly good number of chime bars.

134 Teaching across the school is satisfactory overall but two unsatisfactory lessons were seen. However, they were not caused by lack of confidence or expertise in the subject but by difficulty in controlling the pupils. The time wasted in calling them to order slowed pupils' learning. In one lesson this was compounded by the weak organisation of group work when some pupils sat unoccupied because the teacher gave out too few chime bars for everyone to participate in the activity. In most lessons however, teachers plan challenging work, provide a range of activities and keep pupils busy. In one particularly good lesson, pupils learnt a short song, sang it in a two-part round, composed their own ten-note melody and played this as a round to illustrate that harmonies can be created from one melody. The teacher skilfully controlled this lesson and displayed considerable confidence and musical knowledge. Class and group activities were carefully managed and chime bars were distributed efficiently so that no time was lost and pupils were immediately able to get on with the task. Most teachers convey their own enthusiasm for music and have high expectations that the pupils can cope with the work and learn quickly. The youngest ones, for example, are expected to be able to listen to music, clap the beat and then count the number of beats in a silent passage so that they are ready to join in with the music when it starts again.

135 Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. This includes those who do not have English as their first language and those with special educational needs. Where pupils receive consistently good teaching in Key Stage 2, they make good progress. Pupils in Year 1, for example, listen carefully to *The Royal March of the Lions* and some name the individual instruments that are playing. By Year 6, pupils identify a counter-melody when a recording plays and, while one group sings the tune, another adds that counter-melody. They sensibly evaluate their performance and say why it is easier to sing the counter-melody. Year 3 pupils create an ostinato to accompany a song and those in Year 5 compose and write down their ten-note melody. Singing is also a notable feature in the school. In a whole-school assembly, for example, there is a moving rendition of *The Lord's Prayer* that complements the spiritual atmosphere evoked in the act of collective worship. Pupils sing in tune, with a very pleasant tone and clear diction. The firm piano accompaniment gives them very good support.

136 Most pupils enjoy their music. Year 1 pupils listen carefully to each other as they talk about the sounds that they hear around them in school. Year 2 pupils read the words of their song confidently and those in Year 5 robustly sing their round. They work well together and look after the musical instruments properly. Those in the orchestra talk about the proper way to store and look after their stringed instruments. Over 40 pupils are learning instruments at present and the support that governors have given to providing this opportunity, free of charge, is to be commended. It is a major task for the conductor to ensure that all the instruments are in tune before a practice but, when the orchestra plays, a 'full' sound is produced with a particularly strong cello section contributing a rich tone. Some pupils, who have only been learning for one term, are able to participate fully. Correct procedures are followed: instruments are held in the 'rest' position before playing and everyone follows the conductor so that they start and stop together and observe the correct tempo. The school choir has a good reputation and participates regularly in local musical events such as the 'Dudley Music Live Festival'. The curriculum is therefore enriched through these extra-curricular activities and the musical profile is enhanced within the school and particularly in the community.

137 Pupils also have opportunities to enjoy concerts, such as the 'Lollipop Prom' at the Birmingham Symphony Hall and to participate in workshops when a local steel band and Banghra dancers spend a day in school. Year 4 pupils last year composed a piece of dance music that became part of the CD 'Composed for Dance'. All these activities broaden the pupils' appreciation of music. The school recognises however that its policy and scheme of work need to be revised so that teachers can plan their lessons better and improve the quality of work in classes. The School Improvement Plan identifies this as a priority this year and the co-ordinator has a timetable to achieve it. He is very keen to raise the profile of music and is currently being given time to observe lessons as a way of improving the delivery of the curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

138 A limited number of physical education lessons were observed during the inspection so judgements are also based on discussions with pupils and teachers, and on scrutiny of teachers' planning. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactory standards. This was also the judgement of the last inspection. The pupils reach appropriate levels in their physical development in the reception class and this is continued into Key Stage 1 and 2. Pupils in Year 4 undertake a dance lesson that is well linked to a poem studied in literacy. After an initial warm-up the pupils responded enthusiastically to the teachers' instructions. Another Year 4 class practised their throwing and catching skills in the school playground. The pupils worked well together as they caught and threw in pairs and then moved on to small-sided games that helped develop their knowledge of attack and defence and retaining possession. Year 5 pupils developed their dance skills using the theme of conflict. With the music from *West Side Story* the pupils developed simple dance sequences producing advancing and retreating movements. Year 5 pupils also worked on their tennis skills as part of an indoor games lesson. The pupils successfully served a ball to each other and also sensibly discussed the changes in the body after exercise. Year 6 pupils improved their skills of sending, receiving and striking as part of an indoor hockey session. They worked safely in pairs and as members of a team. In Year 3, pupils undertake swimming lessons as part of their physical education programme and many of the pupils are able to swim unaided, competently and safely for 25 metres, which is the nationally recommended distance for pupils of this age.

139 Pupils generally respond with enthusiasm to physical education lessons. They are well behaved, have positive attitudes and work well together. In the limited number of lessons seen, the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall. Lessons are well planned and show an appropriate progression and development of skills and techniques. The important elements of physical education, such as warming-up and cooling-down are encouraged. However, pupils are not always kept active and this impacts on the quality of learning. Not all teachers have the right balance between giving instructions and allowing pupils to get on with the proposed activity. Too much time is spent talking rather than undertaking sustained energetic activity. Control and discipline are always good and appropriate attention is paid to health and safety, although there are some weaknesses in this area. However, lessons do have good features, for example, in a Year 5 dance lesson the teacher successfully adapted her lesson when it became obvious that her original objectives for the lesson were too difficult for the class. This allowed the pupils to successfully develop new skills and apply effort to their work, which would have been difficult, when the lesson started.

140 The school provides a good balance of activities for physical education. There is a good scheme of work which ensures continuity and progression through the subject. The school's subject policy ensures appropriate curricular coverage and resources for physical education are satisfactory. There is a large school hall that is clean and well maintained and well suited to gymnastics, dance and indoor games. The playing fields and hard surfaces are appropriate for outdoor activities although the playground does become slippery when it is wet. Equipment and resources are stored appropriately so there is ease of access for both staff and pupils. Pupils can attend a range of extra-curricular activities, including football, netball and gymnastics, to develop their physical and sporting skills. A range of competitive sport is also provided and the pupils talk proudly about these activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

141 Pupils' standards in religious education are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages. Throughout the school pupils make satisfactory progress in this subject. Since the last inspection standards in Key Stage 1 have been maintained. However, standards in Key Stage 2 have declined slightly.

142 By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have reasonable recall of the topics they have covered. They understand that people belong to different faiths and that they have different ways of expressing their beliefs. As they move through the key stage they acquire a satisfactory knowledge of the principal celebrations of the faiths they are studying. For example, pupils in Year 1 know about the Hindu celebration of Diwali. By the age of seven pupils have an understanding of the main events in the life of Jesus and relate these to the main festivals of the Christian faith. They have devised their own harvest prayers and taken part in a harvest celebration.

143 As pupils progress through Key Stage 2, they build soundly upon the understanding of the major faiths introduced in their earlier years. By the time they are eleven, pupils have a much more detailed knowledge of rituals, stories and symbolism of these religions. For example, they know that sacred books such as the Torah in Judaism, play an important part in worship. They understand the significance of pilgrimage within Islam, and know about the importance of taking part in the Hajj. They are developing the facility to reflect on questions of belief and the relevance to their own lives. Pupils reflect on the importance of friendship and what they expect from their friends. They then consider the parable of the Good Samaritan and what that has to say about friendship and God's love. In Year 6 they consider the rules we live by, and can make links between the Old Testament Ten Commandments and the rules for living that Jesus expounded during the Sermon on the Mount.

144 At both key stages, well-organised assemblies and acts of worship considerably extend pupils' awareness of religious issues and their capacity to reflect upon the meaning of stories from Christianity and other faiths.

145 Pupils' attitudes to religion are good at both key stages. They listen carefully and offer their comments about the information and ideas they encounter. For example, in a lesson in Year 2, pupils were keen to share ideas about what made each other unique. The comments they made about each other showed a good level of sensitivity to the feelings of other pupils. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 are prepared to share their own experiences and beliefs. For example, during an assembly a group of Muslim pupils talked to the school about how they celebrated the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr.

146 The teaching of religious education is satisfactory overall, although during the inspection one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. There is a good level of subject expertise amongst the staff. Teachers create positive relationships with their pupils and set an appropriate atmosphere to enable them to discuss issues and ideas in a sensible and reflective manner. Religious education makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills at both key stages. Teachers set relevant written work that extends and consolidates pupils' understanding well. In a satisfactory lesson observed in Year 5, pupils were introduced to the importance of ceremony in peoples' lives. The teacher made good use of posters of celebrations to stimulate pupils' interest and they were motivated to discuss the key elements in the photographs and also to draw on their knowledge of religious ritual from earlier lessons. The lesson was devised to ensure that pupils worked hard throughout the lesson and to recognise the special qualities of a celebration. Some pupils found this quite difficult to grasp but through discussion with the teacher and each other by the end of the lesson they had new insights into the importance of celebration within their lives. In the rare unsatisfactory lesson, the lesson started well but the teacher gave pupils insufficient opportunity to discuss what they had covered and because of this, for many pupils in the class, the demands of the follow up task were too difficult for them and they made little progress in understanding the central theme of the lesson or in recording their ideas.

147 Currently the headteacher is overseeing the co-ordination of religious education until a permanent co-ordinator is appointed. The headteacher monitors the teaching of religious education through scrutiny of planning and some lesson observation. The school has a very thorough and useful scheme of work, which gives good support to teachers in their lesson planning. It is based securely on the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. There is a good level of resourcing of posters, books and artefacts. Teachers assess pupils' understanding at the end of a unit of work and their findings are used to inform reports to parents at the end of the school year.