

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S OF THE MOUNT CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Walsall

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104232

Headteacher: Mrs P. Perkins

Reporting inspector: Mrs Christine Field
9479

Dates of inspection: 20th – 22nd November 2000

Inspection number: 191148

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Jesson Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Rev Canon P. Taylor

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mrs C A Field	Registered inspector		The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Pupils' attitudes and values and personal development
			Partnership with parents and carers
			Key Issues for action
Mrs J Butler 9428	Lay inspector		Pupils' welfare, health and safety
Mr D Carrington 15414	Team inspector	Geography	Leadership and management
		History	
		Information and communication technology	
Mr G Warner 2818	Team inspector	Provision for children in the foundation stage	
		English as an additional language	
		Special educational needs	
		Science	
Mrs P Patterson 12145	Team inspector	Art and design	
		English	
		Equal opportunities	
		Design and technology	
Mr J Eadie 20191	Team Inspector	Mathematics	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
		Physical education	
		Music	

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Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated south of Walsall town centre in a prime residential area. Pupils travel from the local area and further afield to receive a Catholic education. There are 221 pupils on roll: 103 boys and 118 girls aged between four and eleven years. Pupils' attainment on entry into reception is above average. Seven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is low compared to the national average. Eight per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language and this is above average. There is no additional support for these pupils as all are assessed as having competent literacy skills, and are confident to study in English. A below average number of pupils have special educational needs. Two of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school aims to foster a living and active faith within its Catholic community where everyone tries their best, respects each other at all times and in all places.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is highly effective in providing a very good quality of education for all its pupils. The ethos is warm and caring and places children at its heart. It consistently enables them to achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science because of extremely well focused leadership and teaching that is very good overall. The headteacher, and her staff have very high expectations of what each pupil can achieve academically and socially, and are constantly striving to improve standards. The school is successfully meeting its aims and mission; pupils are very well prepared for future citizenship. The school gives parents and taxpayers very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Has very good leadership that sets a clear agenda for continuous improvement.
- Promotes very good team spirit amongst staff, governors and community who share a common goal of making the school the best it can be for all pupils.
- Has excellent strategies for teaching basic skills that result in pupils achieving consistently very good standards in English and mathematics.
- Makes very good provision overall for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Builds excellent relationships that both underpin pupils' successful learning and supports the development of very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Maintains very effective links with parents who make a very positive contribution to the life and development of the school.

What could be improved

- Target setting.

The school makes at least satisfactory provision in all areas of its work. Target setting is being used successfully by some teachers and not others. It is a refinement that would make assessment and its use in planning future work for pupils much sharper. The area for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good progress since 1997 in responding to the specific issues raised at the time of the previous inspection. Teaching is significantly better than it was. A good lead has been given to developing whole school procedures for assessing pupils' work and as a result assessment practice is much improved. The school is constantly reviewing the way in which assessment is used to guide the planning of lessons. There are now very

effective systems in place to manage pupils' behaviour at all times and this has resulted in very good standards being achieved. The school has not been complacent and has built upon the strengths reported by the last inspection, and is now even better than it was. The school is very well positioned to make even more improvements.

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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	B	A	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A
science	A	A	A	B

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

Standards achieved by eleven-year-olds in the SATs are well above average overall when compared to all schools. When looking at the achievement of these pupils in the SATs when they were seven, data shows that the proportion reaching higher levels has increased substantially. The school's performance when measured in this way is in line with the top five per cent of schools nationally. In order to sustain this high level of performance the senior management team sets rigorous targets agreed with the local education authority based on a formula that seeks to add value to all pupils' achievement, to make it the very best it can be.

Evidence from inspection indicates that standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language, make very good progress over their time at school. The school is very focused on making improvement to both teaching and learning based on a thorough analysis of performance in SATS. For example, weaknesses in writing apparent in 1999 SATS have been tackled well. Standards are now much higher, and are testament to the success the school has in making improvement. Science has also come under the spotlight and the concerted action to promote pupils' research and investigative skills is paying off as demonstrated by the high standards seen in current Year 6 pupils' work.

Children enter nursery with broadly average attainment. By the end of the Foundation Stage the majority have made good progress and their achievement is above that expected in all areas of learning. Standards at Key Stage 1 are good overall with strengths in literacy skills. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory at all stages. The school does the best it can within limited resources. ICT is top priority in the school's development plan.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to come to school, work hard and do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are well motivated by the rewards set up to encourage positive behaviour in class and at break and lunchtime. One exclusion last year was the first in many years and is not typical.
Personal development and relationships	Very good personal development. Pupils show a willingness to take on roles of responsibility. Excellent relationships are a significant strength in school and pupils show a very high degree of respect for each other's values and beliefs.
Attendance	Good. Pupils are punctual to school and most have good records of attendance that contribute positively to the standards they achieve.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Aged up to five years refers to the Foundation Stage

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

There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Of the 56 lessons observed during this inspection, 14 per cent were satisfactory, 47 per cent were good, 37 per cent were very good and two per cent excellent. The quality of teaching is very good overall. The best teaching is in reception, Years 4, 5 and 6, and this results in pupils making very good rates of progress in these years. The very best lessons went at a cracking pace and teachers showed great skill in questioning pupils to tease out what they knew and through the use of challenging follow-on questions deepened pupils' thinking skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers in upper juniors constantly demand and receive more from their pupils. There is consistently very good teaching of basic skills that enables pupils to become highly literate and numerate. Good specialist teaching in music leads to high standards of performance and very good progress in Key Stage 2. Worthwhile experiences in foundation subjects enables pupils to make good progress in geography and history and steady progress in all other subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good with excellent contribution by the community. The school ensures that all pupils receive a broad and relevant curriculum. A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities gives pupils rich and stimulating additional experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Close attention is paid to the learning needs of all pupils. Precise targets in pupils' individual education plans are well met as a result of innovative teaching.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The school's Catholic ethos is very apparent in all areas of its work. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent; pupils are caring and tolerant young citizens. The provision made for pupils' cultural development is good, however the multi-cultural dimension is under-represented in the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils are at the heart of every decision and action taken in school. The quality of care is consistently high. There are very good procedures to support and guide pupils' academic and personal development that are consistently used.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school is successful in keeping parents up-to-date about its life and work and communication is good. Many parents give freely of their time to help pupils with homework, support work in school or accompany pupils on the educational visits they make. The very positive school/home partnership greatly benefits pupils' achievements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher gives excellent leadership and, in partnership with the successful deputy headteacher, is leading the school forward. This is the bedrock on which all other strengths of the school are built. Co-ordinators make sure that subjects are led well and some are ready to take on a greater role in checking up on the quality of teaching and learning and standards throughout school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are fully part of the management team and take a good role as critical friend. They are applying the principles of best value well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is very good analysis of data by the senior management team used to focus resources on getting better results in performance. There is inconsistent use of target setting and self-review practices in lessons to underpin the targets set at the strategic level.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Finances are carefully controlled and money is spent for the benefit of all pupils. Good quality resources and accommodation are used successfully to provide a very good quality of education. The school has planned to increase information and technology resources when finances allow

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • Behaviour is good and pupils are helped to become mature and responsible. • Teaching is good and there are high expectations. • Homework is just about right. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like to know more about how well their children are doing at school. • A few parents are uncomfortable to approach the school with problems or concerns.

Thirty-nine per cent of parents responded to the questionnaire and 26 parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector. The school recognises that some parents are keen to know more about their child's progress and will be canvassing opinion to find out how communication may be improved. The team agrees that this will be a useful strategy to pursue. The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Since the time of the previous inspection the standards achieved by the seven and eleven-year-olds have improved in English, mathematics, science, history, geography and music. Standards in information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology and physical education have been maintained at satisfactory levels. The school has not been complacent, and has not only put right weaknesses, for example in improving standards in music, but has continued to build on its strengths. The well above average standards in English, mathematics and science found in this inspection are testament to the well-focused attention senior managers have given to analysing strengths and weaknesses and taking concerted action to make improvement. Pupils benefit from an all-round education and develop very good basic skills that will stand them in good stead for life-long learning. St Mary's of the Mount Catholic Primary School is a very effective school that enables all pupils to achieve very good personal and academic standards.

2. Children enter nursery with broadly average attainment. By the end of the Foundation Stage the majority have made very good progress and their achievement is above that expected in all areas defined by the Early Learning Goals. The early year's team understands and recognises fully the needs of young children to enable them to grow in confidence and become effective learners. As a result, children quickly feel safe and secure and ready to take full advantage of the exciting experiences provided. The school adds significant value at this stage of children's education because of the very stimulating learning environment, the good response to individual needs met through very good teaching and support and clear expectations that all children are going to do as well as they can.

3. Standards achieved by seven-year-olds in the 2000 SATs were well above average in reading, and writing, and very high in mathematics compared to schools nationally. The performance in mathematics was in line with the top five per cent of schools nationally. Compared to similar schools results are well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. There is no significant variation between the performance of boys and girls, though girls achieved slightly better at reading and boys did better in mathematics. Teacher assessments in science show standards to be above average.

4. Standards achieved by eleven-year-olds in the 2000 SATs are well above average overall when compared to all schools. When looking at the achievement of these pupils in the SATs when they were seven, data shows that the proportion reaching higher levels has increased substantially. The school's performance when measured in this way is in line with the top five per cent of schools nationally.

5. In order to sustain this high level of performance the senior management team sets rigorous targets based on a formula that seeks to add value to all pupils' achievement, in order to make it the best it can be. A thorough analysis of the test papers has been used effectively by the school to direct resources on making improving the way subjects are taught and learnt. For example, weaknesses in writing in the 1999 SATs have been tackled successfully through

a co-ordinated and comprehensive strategy that has meant teachers focussing on writing and enabling all pupils well-planned opportunities to write at length. Standards are now much higher, and are testament to the success the school has in making improvement. The opportunities for pupils to work independently in developing their investigative and research skills are currently being given high priority in mathematics and science because of shortfalls in pupils' skills identified by good evaluation of test data.

6. At Key Stage 1 evidence from inspection indicates that standards in English are well above average at Key Stage 1 and above average in mathematics and science. Standards in English, mathematics and science are well above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those who learn English as an additional language, make very good progress over their time at school.

7. The school has excellent strategies for developing pupils' basic skills. The strategy for literacy has been very well implemented and has had a very positive impact on raising standards in English. Pupils develop skills of a high order in reading and the overall level of attainment in reading is well above average at the end of both key stages. Pupils are able to make out unfamiliar words by using clues from the context and they use phonic skills very confidently. Writing skills are very good and used widely in all subjects so that pupils get plenty of practice in writing for different purposes. Pupils can plan and structure their work accurately. They write creatively and for various audiences. Pupils have very good speaking and listening skills and are confident in discussion. The use of Standard English is good and pupils use a wide range of vocabulary when putting forward their ideas.

8. Teachers have introduced the National Numeracy Strategy successfully and this is enabling the youngest and oldest pupils to work with increasing speed and accuracy. Pupils show high levels of confidence to use mathematical vocabulary and have good recall of mathematical facts, often at a level much beyond what is expected for their age. Older pupils reason and think with good logic. They present workings out and finished work carefully and accurately. Setting by ability in Year 6 in mathematics is proving beneficial as it focuses the teacher's attention more precisely on individual learning requirements. During the inspection, four very able Year 6 mathematicians were observed to use and interpret points in four quadrants. They freely admitted that working with negative numbers was very challenging but with well-judged support from the teacher persevered until they had tackled all the questions she had set. By the end of the lesson these pupils had made huge leaps forward in their knowledge and understanding about co-ordinates and could work with confidence when finding co-ordinates of points that are determined by geometric information. A very high level of achievement for their age.

9. The school has set realistic targets in English and mathematics for 2001. These are eight per cent above the government's targets for the expected achievement of eleven year-olds. The school is well on track to meet these. The school is very successful at enabling more pupils to achieve the higher level 5 than in many schools. In fact two thirds of all pupils achieved the higher level five in English SATs last May. The school has so far chosen not to target achievement above level 5, even though it is sometimes providing work at very high levels in English and mathematics as described above. This is one aspect of target setting that could usefully be extended alongside developing assessment practices.

10. Standards in science are well above the level expected at seven and eleven years. Teachers provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to choose their own resources, organise their work and to discuss what they observe. This gives pupils good opportunities to 'learn by doing'. The level of pupils' basic scientific general knowledge is above average and pupils have good command of scientific vocabulary in oral and written pieces. Report writing is of especially good quality. Progress is very good overall. The school does not target individual pupil's expected achievement in science in the close detail it gives to English and mathematics, and this is a missed opportunity.

11. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress, especially in developing language, literacy and numeracy skills. This is because the gains they make in learning are very closely monitored and recorded. This information is very well used to assess progress towards existing targets and to set new ones. Individual education plans are well written and all staff are aware of what is in them; this ensures that work is always at the right level of challenge. These very good rates of progress are seen in both academic work and behaviour. For example, individual pupils make great strides when being taught in small groups or as individuals. The work of support staff in these situations has a very positive impact on progress.

12. The school has not yet taken the same considered approach to evaluating how well potentially talented and gifted pupils are achieving. There are some very able pupils in the school who are doing well enough because of the school's desire to treat everyone as important and in so doing are responsive to individual needs. Two boys, for example, currently attend a class set up by the Local Education Authority for gifted mathematicians in the borough. The work set for very able pupils is not always demanding enough however and this is one aspect of provision that requires targeting if the potential of all pupils is to be realised absolutely, and standards are to be at the very highest level.

13. Pupils make very good progress in music, good progress in geography and history and satisfactory progress in art and design, design and technology and physical education throughout the school. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory at all stages. Pupils make no more than steady progress in learning due to the fact that they only get a small amount of time when it is their turn to use the computer. The school does the best it can within limited resources. ICT is top priority in the school's development plan. Meanwhile, the co-ordinator has ensured that ICT is planned into lessons in all classes to support learning of this key skill.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The school is well ordered, friendly and caring. The Catholic Christian ethos supports the good set of principles to live by that are embedded into everyday life in school. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those from non-white European families are valued for being themselves. Parents appreciate the ways in which the school fosters pupils' sense of social responsibility and maturity. Strengths regarding pupils' attitudes and behaviour reported at the time of the previous inspection, have all been sustained. Levels of attendance in the school are good and are contributing positively to the very good quality of education provided.

15. Pupils are happy in school and are keen to attend. The quality of relationships at all levels is excellent and everyone tries hard to do their best for one another. Instances of bullying are taken seriously and are responded to effectively. In one assembly, Year 4 pupils explored the various types of bullying that could happen through role-play of situations they might easily find themselves in. They froze the action at key points and asked the rest of the juniors how they felt about the situation being re-enacted. Pupils answered openly and honestly about the hurt caused when on the receiving end of bullying. Pupils have very good awareness of the difference between right and wrong and know the right action to take. In this instance they were clear that they would tell an adult about any bullying going on so that it could be dealt with. Behaviour in the great majority of lessons is very good. Very occasionally, in lower juniors, pupils were observed to fuss and depend too much on the teacher. There has been one exclusion in the last twelve months. Exclusion is used very much as the last resort and record keeping shows this isolated instance to be untypical.

16. Children in the Foundation Stage have made a very settled start to their education and show confident attitudes to work, to one another and to adults. They work with good effort and for prolonged periods, and show immense pride when they are told how well they have done something. By the time they are five most collaborate well with one another, co-operate successfully and behave very responsibly.

17. Throughout the school pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and this is a key reason why standards in work and behaviour are so high. Pupils with special educational needs show very good levels of interest due to the very good support given to them, and because their efforts are praised and recognised. Pupils work with diligence and perseverance; for example, in science when building electrical circuits to power moving objects. Pupils work with good effort and imagination; for example, when dancing to music that makes them think of snowflakes falling and melting.

18. Pupils respond well to the code of conduct and know well the effect their actions have on others. Rules are displayed in all classes that the pupils have devised themselves. There are agreed rules for playtime behaviour and Year 2 pupils have written a firework code for example. Most are well motivated by the award of house-points for good work and effort. Older pupils particularly value the headteacher's award which is seen to be the highest accolade they can be given for hard work. Personal and social education lessons are used very positively for pupils to think about others' feelings and to share ideas about special things for example. Pupils know very clearly what is right and wrong, and show respect for one another and their teachers. When given the opportunity, pupils take on roles of responsibility well. For example, pupils raise funds to support a school in Sudan. Other charities are also supported directly by pupils' using their own initiative to fund-raise. Through such work pupils know that they are fortunate and show empathy for those in different situations.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. In 1997, when the school was last inspected, the quality of teaching was satisfactory in 84 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in 16 per cent. There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. During this inspection the quality of teaching observed was a 100 per cent satisfactory or better in all the lessons observed, with a much higher proportion of good or very good quality than typically found in primary schools.

20. Problems concerning the management of behaviour reported in 1997 have been sorted out and there is now a consistent and positive approach to managing behaviour. Teachers are very confident to teach all subjects and they have very good subject knowledge across the board. Weaknesses in assessment have been successfully tackled and there is now an agreed whole-school approach to planning that builds in what is to be assessed and when. There is very good use of assessment to guide planning of the Early Learning Goals and in English, mathematics and science but its use is less advanced in other subjects. Some teachers are using pupils' personal targets set in English and mathematics to support positively both teaching and learning. However this good practice is not widespread and is something that the school could usefully seek to extend.

21. Of the 56 lessons observed during this inspection, 14 per cent were satisfactory, 47 per cent were good, 37 per cent were very good and two per cent excellent. The quality of teaching is very good overall. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed.

22. The best teaching enabling the best learning is in the reception class, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6. Children in the Foundation Stage are both nurtured and developed as effective learners because of high quality teaching and very effective support. Teachers in upper juniors constantly demand and receive more from their pupils. They inspire and challenge pupils to give always of their best. Relationships in all classes are excellent; teachers want to do their best for the pupils and vice-versa and this shows in the very good outcomes. There is consistently very good teaching of basic skills throughout the school that is enabling pupils to become highly literate and numerate. Very good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Precise targets in these pupils' individual education plans are well met as a result of innovative teaching. Good specialist teaching in music leads to high standards of performance and very good progress in Key Stage 2. Worthwhile experiences in foundation subjects enables pupils to make good progress in geography and history and steady progress in all other subjects.

23. There are no unsatisfactory aspects in the qualities of teaching. Teachers are reflective about their practice and keen to make improvement. There is very good team spirit amongst staff who are positive about sharing ideas in the interest of giving the best to pupils. Classrooms at St Mary's are exciting places to be.

24. All teachers in school demonstrate the following characteristics in their teaching:

- Very good subject knowledge and understanding of the needs of pupils;
- High expectations;
- Very good teaching of basic skills;
- Good management and organisation;
- Good use of time, support staff and resources;
- Good quality marking.

25. These positive features lead to all pupils acquiring good knowledge, improving skills and secure understanding in all the subjects they study and very good gains in their learning in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and work with very good application and perseverance. They are immensely proud of their achievements and are well motivated by the positive reward systems operating in classes. Most teachers have very good

understanding of the needs of the range of pupils in their class and set work that is based on what they expect pupils to achieve. Teachers use mark books to record pupils' achievements at regular intervals and these are a good feature of practice. There is less recording of more immediate learning gains and this is one aspect that the school is aware it needs to refine. There is very good use of target setting in upper juniors that drives pupils to improve on their personal best and in so doing achieve higher standards in academic work. When talking to inspectors, Year 6 pupils showed good levels of self- knowledge about what they were good at and where they needed to improve their work. The good practice in target setting and self- review has yet to be exploited to the full elsewhere in school. There is limited use of the clear objectives being set to drive learning at the start and during the lesson being returned to in the plenary session. Parents are keen to play their part in helping pupils make the very best rates of progress possible and help realise the individual targets set.

26. The very best lessons went at a cracking pace and teachers showed great skill in questioning pupils to tease out what they knew and through challenging follow-on questions deepened pupils' thinking skills and demanded that pupils work quickly and productively. This was characterised by the mental maths component of a numeracy lesson in Year 4 in which pupils were halving and doubling a series of numbers. Pupils' knew that half of 32 was 16 and that 14 had to be doubled to make 28 for example. They answered quickly and accurately as the teacher shot more difficult questions quick-fire. Pupils responded confidently in explaining to others their strategies for halving or doubling. Most could work out in their heads what amount was needed to make 100 from 54, 32 to 88 for example. To close the teacher said, "let's finish with a really difficult one" and this was met with a cheer of delight. In the very best lessons, teachers have planned to ensure that all pupils are stretched and in consequence make the best rates of progress possible. In this numeracy lesson, all pupils achieved well, and most worked at a much higher level than expected for their age.

27. Teachers generally provide well for the high flyers in upper juniors and they are given challenging and demanding work to do in English, mathematics and science. This is not the case in Key Stage 1 where less focus has so far been placed on targeting high achievement. The school successfully enables many pupils to maximise their potential, and the fact that two thirds of all Year 6 pupils taking SATs last year achieved the higher level 5 from an average starting point demonstrates this. It is surprising that so far only one pupil has yet achieved the even higher level 6 in view of the level of work seen being set by teachers during this inspection. Teachers' mark books saved from last year show attainment at level 5, but no higher. There are a handful of pupils in the current Year 6 who have potential to reach this higher level 6 in tested subjects next May.

28. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively taught as a result of the very good policy and provision that is in place. Teachers have secure understanding of pupils' needs as a result of well-devised individual education plans that have precise and achievable targets. This means that these pupils tend to make very good progress in developing their basic skills alongside good development of self-esteem and self-motivation. Pupils with special educational needs are switched onto learning and achieve well due to the school's considered approach. Class teachers are involved with the SENCO in writing the individual education plans and are very aware of individual needs. The individual education plans support pupils well. Highly effective teaching that makes full use of good quality resources to assist learning ensures that pupils benefit from teachers' best efforts. Support staff are well deployed and involved in the planning of how needs will be met.

29. Teachers make good use of homework to extend learning and parents give very good support to this. In reception one boy had made a book with the help of his parents based on his weekend visit to Warwick Castle. He shared the text and pictures with his classmates during the literacy hour, speaking excitedly about the dark dungeons and how scared he had felt until he held his mum's hand. Others in the class sat enthralled and asked very sensible questions that showed how well they had listened to, and enjoyed the story. Through such innovative use of the pupils' own experiences the teacher stimulated speaking and listening skills to a level far above that expected for pupils of this age.

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

30. The curriculum opportunities provided for pupils throughout the school are good overall with some very good features. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when there were significant shortcomings in the curriculum provided. For example, there were no long-term plans for a number of subjects, including mathematics; these are now all in place. The curriculum satisfies all the statutory requirements and provides a very good programme of personal, social and health education. The curriculum is broad and has been carefully planned so that it is very relevant for the pupils in this school. As well as ensuring that the Literacy Hour is effectively implemented, time has been retained for a number of the traditional skills of English, such as spelling and handwriting. The school has also given numeracy a high priority.

31. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage is very good. Planning for these young children already incorporates the Early Learning Goals for children under five as set out in the recently published curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. Lesson planning is detailed and the children have access to a wide range of suitable activities and learning experiences which prepare them very well for studying the subjects of the National Curriculum when they are ready.

32. The very good range of extra-curricular activities, including provision for visits and visitors, makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Members of staff and some parents give generously of their time providing after-school activities that include seasonal sports, chess, and a wide variety of musical opportunities including a choir and a very good forty-piece orchestra. Systems to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to take part are fully in place.

33. The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is very good. Clear procedures are in place for the identification and assessment of these pupils. The information gained is used to particularly good effect in providing work for pupils in withdrawal groups. Individual education plans of good quality are provided for all pupils for whom these are appropriate. They are reviewed regularly and parents are kept informed of, and fully involved with these reviews. The pupils with statements of special educational need are provided with most suitable support, in line with the requirements of their statements.

34. The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the school. This represents an improvement since the last report, although some aspects of pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding are less well developed. Pupils are being well prepared to take their place in an ever-changing world but there are missed opportunities for them to learn about non-western culture in more depth. The daily assemblies meet statutory requirements and make a very good contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral and social understanding.

35. The provision for the pupils' spiritual development is very good and is based securely on the Catholic ethos of the school. The acts of corporate worship provide opportunities to guide pupils' spiritual development with very well-chosen stories, dramas and prayers. Proper attention is given in assemblies to allocating time for the children to reflect on the planned weekly themes. Time is also planned in some lessons for the pupils to reflect on the spiritual

dimension. However, there are fewer opportunities for the wonder of what they are learning to be considered. For example, when studying a poem, too little was made of the majesty of the words and the feelings expressed within the poem.

36. Provision for the pupils' moral development is excellent. All adult members of the school community provide excellent role models for the pupils to follow. The school provides an ethos where expectations are that relationships, behaviour and co-operation will be at the heart of learning both academically and socially. The pupils learn the essential differences between right and wrong acts at an early age. The practice of each class developing their own rules, rewards and sanctions ensures that the pupils understand very clearly what is expected of them. In consequence, pupils are tolerant of one another's differences and the school is a harmonious community free from tensions of any kind.

37. Provision for the pupils' social development is very good. All pupils are encouraged to carry out classroom jobs. Older pupils have a rota of monitor's duties. The pupils often undertake tasks unbidden, for example, clearing up equipment or items accidentally dropped on the floor. They are encouraged to think of others in a variety of ways, organising their own events and collections for a number of charities, for instance. The school regards it as a high priority to turn out good young citizens and this aim is behind the success of much that is done in this area.

38. The school makes good provision for the pupils' cultural development. Provision for the understanding of local culture and customs is very good through planned learning in geography, history and art-based activities. Less well-planned are opportunities for pupils to discover the customs, arts, music and dance of cultures other than those of western European origin. Whilst Judaism is studied in religious education lessons, there is insufficient broadening of the pupils' understanding of the faiths and cultures that exist within the rich diversity of modern British society – within which they will one day have to live.

39. The school has very excellent links with the local community and a variety of schools in the neighbourhood, which make a very good contribution to the pupils' development. There are very strong links with St. Mary's Catholic Church and the school is regarded as the parish school. For example, the orchestra and choir contribute to parish masses on special saints' days and festivals. There are also productive links with the secondary school to which many of the pupils go. There are wide-ranging links with the local community, for example the pupils are invited to perform at a Rotary Club entertainment for senior citizens.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The strengths outlined in the previous inspection concerning pupils' welfare, health and safety have all been sustained at a very good level. The ethos in school is warm and caring and places children at its heart. All adults working in the school are vigilant and safety-conscious, making sure that written procedures are followed carefully. Pupils are taught safe practice in lessons and risks are assessed before conducting new activities. The school has very effective health and safety procedures. Child protection procedures are well-known to staff and follow the locally agreed guidelines.

41. The headteacher and staff know the pupils and their families well, mainly through the strong links with the parish church. This feature underpins the very good educational and personal support and guidance provided for pupils, which is carefully tailored to their individual needs. There are consistently high expectations encouraged and rewarded by a variety of incentives, like the use of stamps in the nursery, and house points in the main school, which promote the development of high standards both academically and in personal

conduct. The promotion of good behaviour has been a focus since the last inspection, and class rules are made known to parents to enlist their support. The consistent application of the school's behaviour policy has resulted in very high standards of behaviour, excellent enthusiasm for school and has contributed to the excellent relationships that underpin the pupils' successful achievements. The school's work on anti-bullying is a positive feature. During the week of inspection Year 4 pupils performed a role-play in front of other junior-age pupils to highlight the feelings of fear and anxiety that bullying causes others. The headteacher in her closure ensured that all pupils were aware of the procedures to follow if they should feel at risk from bullying or harassment. There are good procedures for monitoring absence and promoting good attendance.

42. The school has made very good progress in response to the key issue of the last inspection regarding the ways in which teachers assessed the needs of individual pupils and used this knowledge when planning the next steps in learning. Indeed there has also been significant improvement in adapting the curriculum in response to areas of relative weakness as identified in the end of key stage tests. Good examples of this include the current emphasis on extended writing in Key Stage 2, and on investigative work in science. Teachers now have good procedures for assessing pupils' levels of understanding and attainment, and they identify the next targets for improvement for individuals in the areas of reading, writing and numeracy. However they are still not always clear how these targets influence the planning of lessons and the use of identified learning targets is not widespread in other subject areas. Pupils are given few opportunities to become involved in reviewing their own progress so that they are clear about what they need to do to improve.

43. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support which enables them to make very good progress, particularly through the later part of Key Stage 2. Those pupils with particular gifts and skills are recognised but not systematically identified, for example two able mathematicians attend an out of school class organised by the Local Education Authority. However, there is no special provision made in school for those who are gifted or talented.

44. Parents value the ways in which the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The programme of personal support and guidance is very effective in not only preparing pupils well for the secondary phase of their education, but also for future citizenship.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The very effective links with parents, parish and community reported at the time of the previous inspection, have all been well maintained. The home-school agreement is a positive feature in building this successful partnership. The school works hard to involve parents in its work as it recognises the great value that a positive home-school partnership has in supporting pupils' learning. Parents are very pleased that their children are happy at school, make good progress because of good teaching, are expected to behave well, get the right amount of homework and become mature and responsible.

46. The majority of parents play an extremely beneficial part in the education of their children through supporting homework and attending meet the teacher evenings for example. There is an excellent level of parental involvement in the school's daily life. Many parents

give freely of their time to support both teaching and learning, such as helping with reading, playing the piano in assemblies and assisting with the activities in the reception class. Parents are closely involved throughout the whole process of meeting the needs of special educational needs pupils. They are informed of the school's intentions once the staff have decided special needs support is required. Their views are valued and a strong partnership ensues. They continue to have close involvement when all stages of special needs provision are reviewed. The level of attendance at regular review meetings is very good which confirms the closeness of the partnership between school and home in supporting this aspect of the school's work.

47. An active Parents Teacher Association raises additional funding to support the school's priorities for improvement through organising social events. A number of governors are also parents or have had children in school in the past. They show good commitment to supporting the school and use their wide range of experience to help improve the quality of education for pupils.

48. Communication at school works well overall, though some parents would like more detail about how well their children are doing at school. Pupils' annual written reports provide clear information about what pupils have achieved, but do not always state explicitly what the next step is for improvement. Seldom is there reference to personal targets, though these are set in English and mathematics for all pupils. A small number of parents said that they feel uncomfortable to approach the school with problems or concerns. It was not apparent to inspectors exactly why this was, but the headteacher is keen to canvass opinion to find out how communication may be improved.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. St Mary's Primary School is given excellent leadership by the headteacher and other key managers play a central role in taking the school forward. Some senior staff have changed since the 1997 inspection, but the strengths of management identified then are still apparent, and in many respects, are better still.

50. The headteacher knows exactly what she wants to achieve and with it, how the school must improve. She has her finger firmly on the pulse of the school, making rigorous checks to ensure that standards are at best levels and she enthuses other staff to work as hard, show the same level of determination and commitment and to achieve similar results as herself. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher who brings complementary skills to bear on his work. He too has clear insights into the work of the school and motivates other managers very well. Currently, the headteacher and deputy comprise the senior management team.

51. Senior post-holders, who are invited to join the senior management team from time to time, have growing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and they play a good part in taking the school forward, for example in the areas of special educational needs and assessment. They are joined in this quest by the co-ordinators who work very hard to make improvement to their subjects. The visitor to school quickly detects that it is a place of hard work, productivity, purposefulness and high morale. This approach affects learning, as pupils respond to the expectation and challenge provided in very positive ways and they work well to achieve good standards. In a bid to improve on things that are already done well, co-ordinators are ready to take on additional roles and responsibilities, such as that of monitoring

in colleagues' lessons in order to identify and share the very best practice, strive for improvement and build on the school's many successes.

52. The provision for special educational needs is very good because of the very good management and leadership by a hard working and committed co-ordinator (SENCO.) In turn she is well supported by class teachers, as they are fully involved in the writing of individual education plans. The nursery nurse, learning support assistants and voluntary helpers as well as dedicated parental involvement also gives good support. All of these people are equally committed to giving pupils as much support as possible to help them do well at school. Parental and voluntary helpers are well briefed in order to give appropriate support. The SENCO ensures that the individual education plans (IEPs) are comprehensively documented with accurate assessment of specific needs. She joins with class teachers to write them so that all staff are aware of their role in meeting the IEPs. Support staff and outside agencies become involved through the determined efforts of the SENCO.

53. The school has very clear and detailed equal opportunities policy statements. The aims and values of the schools fully embrace social inclusion. Every pupil's unique qualities are valued. There is a very strong commitment to providing all pupils with equal access to the school's activities. This is achieved by very capable leadership, which has put in place effective review processes to ensure that the needs of all pupils are well provided for.

54. Governors are also well drawn into the management of the school. They are led very well by the chairman and grasp the ever-increasing demands made of them willingly. They use a wide range of indicators, such as standards and the quality of teaching and resulting progress, to measure whether the school stands good comparison to the best schools elsewhere. For example, governors have decided to deploy additional teachers to support learning in Year 2 and Year 6 and this is having beneficial impact on the good and often very good academic standards being achieved. Governors have good insights into what the school does well and what could be improved, and are increasingly using data to assist them to make sure that the principles of best value are applied well in school.

55. Since the 1997 inspection, managers have improved the process of measuring the school's own performance and taking effective action to bring advancement. Comprehensive data is collected, particularly on standards, analysed thoroughly, and used to set finely tuned targets for various groups and classes. These targets for achievement are rigorous, tracked carefully and usually matched by the pupils, who achieve well. Of more recent development are the individual targets set for all pupils. A few teachers have begun to give recognition to these in lesson delivery but practice is variable. Few teachers use targets to support their assessment of learning in lessons or in recorded work. The headteacher is aware that a more systematic approach to target setting at the lesson and pupils' level will support the tracking and review of whole-school targets with even better focus. Key managers have good working knowledge of the process of checking for improvement, and other staff are ready to be drawn more into this process in order to maximise results. A shared strength of all staff is the commitment not just to high standards but also to a calm, friendly, supportive, yet purposeful school ethos. Staff and governors are as much concerned for the development of all pupils into mature, sensible and pleasant young people. The visitor to school is immediately impressed by the results of this determination. St Mary's School is a very good place to be.

56. Managers and staff use the available finance very well in the best interests of the pupils. School improvement is targeted properly by the school development plan and this is used well to measure subsequent success. All funds, including those designated for particular use, such as supporting pupils with special educational needs or boosting standards of literacy, are used very well and such spending achieves its intention. A key strength of the school is its staff. They are all, teaching, non-teaching, administrative, catering and cleaning staff alike, committed to the school and put the pupils first. Because this is the case, pupils have highly effective lessons and they enjoy very good chances to succeed.

57. It is evident that the school has moved ahead since the 1997 inspection. Managers know there are a number of things that remain for improvement, such as the more consistent use of assessment and marking to target individual improvement and the enhancement of resources for information and communication technology. The sense of shared approach to these challenges is very good and the school can celebrate its many strengths as it moves successfully towards future improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. The school is highly effective in providing a very good education for pupils, achieving very good standards, turning out well-rounded individuals and giving very good value for money. The headteacher has maintained a freshness of approach over the many years she has been at the school, constantly questioning how things could be better. The senior management team holds very accurate insights into the overall effectiveness of the school. They not only lead by example but also bring out the very best from the team.

In its pursuit for excellence, senior managers and governors should ensure the following:

Rationalise and extend the use of target setting so that:

- managers explore ways of setting school targets aimed at increasing the performance of the very able pupils in English, mathematics and science and assessing their on-going progress;
- teachers use pupils' individual targets more consistently in the planning of lessons, to inform the direction of lessons, to support group-work, to review what has been learnt in the plenary session and to guide their marking of work;.
- pupils are involved in setting and using targets regularly to support their learning and are encouraged to review their progress against the targets so that they are more directly involved in realising their personal goals;
- parents are enabled to play a full part in supporting target setting and on-going review.

(Paragraphs: 10, 12, 20, 25, 42, 48, 55, 57, 82, 87, 96-98, 100, 108)

Additional aspects that governors should give attention to in their action plan are:

- i) Enhancing resources for supporting the development of ICT (Paragraphs 9, 12, 27, 57, 107, 122, 125, 128, 129, 131)
- ii) Seeking to provide for the very highest attainers in a way that ensures their special educational needs are assessed and met fully. (Paragraphs 13, 43, 97)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	16

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	37	47	14	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	13	221
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	24

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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
		2000	19	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	19
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	32	32	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (94)	100 (94)	100 (99)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	18	18
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	32	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (81)	97 (85)	97 (95)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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
		2000	18	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	18	18
	Girls	15	16	16
	Total	33	34	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (74)	97 (78)	97 (87)
	National	75 (71)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	18	18
	Girls	15	16	16
	Total	33	34	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (78)	97 (78)	97 (93)
	National	70 (68)	73 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	11
Indian	10
Pakistani	9
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	
White	159
Any other minority ethnic group	

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.6
Average class size	31.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	95

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	37

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	377 951
Total expenditure	376 167
Expenditure per pupil	1 555
Balance brought forward from previous year	16 647
Balance carried forward to next year	18 431

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	234
Number of questionnaires returned	91

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	36	0	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	49	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	48	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	51	13	2	1
The teaching is good.	52	41	2	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	53	23	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	35	21	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	32	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	31	43	21	4	1
The school is well led and managed.	51	43	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	49	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	41	12	3	4

NB: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

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

59. The good provision for children in the Foundation Stage has been well sustained since the last inspection. Currently there are 56 children provided for in the Foundation Stage: 26 children in nursery on a part time basis and 30 children in the reception class on a full time basis. There is good liaison between these two classes with the co-ordinator teaching in the reception class planning jointly with the nursery nurse who teaches in the nursery. Both nursery and reception classes are well-organised and stimulating learning environments.

60. All of the children in nursery have an equal amount of time in a morning or an afternoon. All transfer into the reception class when they are four. They begin full time attendance in the reception class in the year in which they become five.

61. The reception classroom in the main school building is a good size that enables children to have sufficient space to learn through a range of activities and so gain a great deal from their learning opportunities. The nursery is currently housed in a mobile building away from the reception classroom where space is at a premium. Effective liaison between staff in the two buildings is ensuring that children have a good deal right through this stage of their education. The school has plans for a permanent building large enough to take all children in the Foundation Stage; it is currently going through the planning application process.

62. Many of the children come into nursery with less well-developed personal and social skills than in other areas of learning. In consequence appropriate emphasis is given to developing the children's understanding of the need to share and care for one another and the to be supported into independence early on. There is good identification of those children who appear to be experiencing difficulties with learning. There is also close monitoring of the minority of children who come from homes where English is not the first language spoken to check that they are learning successfully. All the children are assessed formally around half-term according to the local authority's assessment system. This is then followed up by a further baseline assessment made in the reception class. These assessments clearly show that in nursery most children are achieving the level expected for children of this age and by the time they leave the reception class they are above the level expected in all aspects covered by the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. This good progress results from the good teaching in nursery and the very good teaching in reception class. The stepping stones of the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning are being comprehensively covered.

Personal, social and emotional development

63. Assessment shows that children enter nursery with less well-developed skills in these areas than in any other assessed area of their development. They reach the stated goals by the time that they leave nursery because of the effective planning of the stepping stones that the children need to travel in order to reach them. This effective provision is then enhanced by the experiences children receive in the reception class so that most progress beyond the learning goals and attain above the level expected in their personal, social and emotional development by the time they begin in Year 1.

64. In both classes there is a good range of activities right from the start of the week where children work and play well together. They voluntarily join in recognition of numbers as registers are taken and applaud efforts by spontaneously clapping when children take the lead in giving correct answers to teachers and nursery nurses questions. Their confidence shows a secure emotional background has been quickly established. They share activity resources as they paint and glue and when using the sand and water trays. They go about their tasks with high levels of maturity.

65. Staff in both classes work as a team. In the nursery, the nursery nurse has a student and a regular group of parent helpers to support her effectively. In reception class the teacher has regular classroom assistant support together with a regular group of voluntary helpers and parents. All of these adults treat one another with respect as well as treating the children with an equal amount of respect. In consequence they are excellent role models for the children to follow. These well-established relationships have a positive impact upon the children's learning in all areas. As the children are so secure they feel able to work in small and larger groups with all adults so that their social skills are well developed. An example of this was when the children in the nursery went outside to see the effects of water on a frosty morning and worked out of doors with good confidence. In the reception class when they were learning about numbers some worked with the teacher acting out "Five speckled frogs" whilst other groups worked industriously with other adults making the speckled frogs come alive by making masks, others made currant buns to follow up their singing of "Five currant buns" and a fourth group placed candles on paper cakes. Many work with high levels of independent concentration and there is little flitting between activities.

Communication, language and literacy

66. In both the nursery and reception classes many activities are based around developing skills in these areas of learning. Some of the learning is incidental learning as staff take every opportunity to engage children meaningfully in talking about what they are doing and why. This approach is successfully developing the children's speaking and listening skills and is enabling them to make good progress, and achieve beyond the level expected for five year-olds.

67. There are, however, many activities that are carefully planned in order to develop the skills sequentially. Staff promote a love of books that is a central core to the children's learning and instills great pleasure and enjoyment in sharing books together. The children act as story-tellers when they "read" from books such as "The hungry caterpillar", show the pictures to the other children and find delight in doing so. Children listen with care to instructions and join in to show their understanding of what they have to do by their sensible responses. All adults value the contributions that the children make and this has a positive impact upon their learning. The children sit sociably together in the book corners and show their understanding of how a book is made up as they go from back to front. They talk about the pictures and the way that the story might develop, before actually being told the ending.

68. They recognise initial sounds and how words can be formed from putting them together. They start this process in nursery when they find their own names to help them to self-register. It moves on quickly from this in reception class when they write under the teachers words at first but move on rapidly and successfully to writing their own stories and accounts of happenings in their own lives. Parents give good support to developing the children's reading skills effectively. They make efficient use of the computer in both classes

as they print names and words that help them in writing more fully in reception class. Many children are working within level 1 of the National Curriculum before they leave reception.

The very highest attaining children occasionally work on tasks, for example dictionary skills development that are in advance of this level.

Mathematical development

69. The children are given many opportunities to develop their mathematical understanding. Teachers and support staff plan work very thoroughly and pay good attention to make tasks meaningful to children. In nursery they quickly learn about matching numbers one-to-one as they move around in the playground when they are finding out how frost changes the water that they are painting circles with. This also supports their understanding of shapes in an imaginative way. They further develop their understanding of shape and colour with shape blocks. Sequencing through threading shapes on to laces further develops this understanding effectively.

70. The imaginative way of enhancing mathematical understanding is further developed in reception class through the very good teaching strategies of making learning based around real life experiences. In finding out about numbers from zero to ten they sing songs such as "Five speckled frogs" and "Five currant buns". They then make the frog masks, bake currant buns after they have made them and made use of illustrations, hats and rings to reinforce the concept of numbers. They draw five animals and then add one more to build up their knowledge of numbers up to ten. The teacher misses no opportunity to advance the children's learning. This good range of activities is further well supported by the interactive way that adults ask perceptive, open ended questions that make the children think carefully before they answer. They make good progress against the stepping stones of learning so that they achieve above the requirements of the Early Learning Goals. Many children are working well within the first level of the National Curriculum before they move into Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. Teachers and support staff enable children to achieve above the levels set out in the Early Learning Goals by the time that they move into Year 1 as a result of the rich variety of experiences that they plan for developing the children's knowledge and understanding of the world. They make use of their immediate surroundings and gain awareness about seasons through collecting leaves and using them to stimulate ideas for making pictures and models in art work. They use construction kits to build big towers that they will see in towns successfully. They make use of the mouse with growing confidence and control to show their beginning of understanding of the computer as a window on the world.

72. They consider the differences in time as they record their sort of day in pictures and with some words. In the inspection week they were planting bulbs and will be watching them grow over the next few weeks and months to further support their understanding of how time passes. They use fingers skilfully to make kites as they cut and stick together to make a successful end product.

73. In reception class the very good teaching builds upon these early experiences. They find out where some of the contents of the ingredients of their buns come from. The passage of time is made meaningful to them as they wait for their buns to cook. They continue to use their knowledge of the computer as they word-process some of their stories on to the screen.

Physical development

74. The children enjoy all of the activities that develop their physical skills so that they are above the level expected by the time that they move into Year 1. In nursery they move around the playground with good regard for the safety of everyone. They do this in the classroom as well when they move around the different range of activities. They also have ample opportunity to make beneficial use of the hall where the need for care and safety in movement around a larger space is reinforced for them.

75. In the reception class the children are encouraged to be independent in their dressing and undressing skills when they prepare for their dance lesson in the hall. They respond to the tape that leads the lesson by listening intently and following instructions carefully. They show very good measures of self-control as they skip, show large steps of a giant and the quick, small steps of an old lady busily working. This is so successful because the teacher and support member of staff take a full part and intervene sensitively to ensure progress in children's learning. The high expectations of adults are responded to positively by the children who gain in confidence and creativity as a result.

Creative development

76. The children show good measures of enjoyment as they engage in the creative activities that are devised for them in both nursery and reception classes. Teachers very good planning leads to very good teaching of a range of imaginative experiences given to the children that enables them to make good progress and attain beyond the level expected by the time they are five.

77. In nursery they make frosty day pictures with natural materials such as leaves that they have collected themselves. They add to these pictures from their imagination as they add glitter to represent the frost that they have just experienced. They have opportunities to make effective salt dough snails that they have been considering when they have been studying mini beasts. They work co-operatively on collages of favourite stories and events.

78. In reception the children make their own illustrations of characters in stories. They are interested in experimenting with paint so that they begin to think about changes in colours by mixing paints together which they are able to do to good effect.

79. They make music together sometimes incidentally in nursery as they sing nursery rhymes when they have circle time together. They also make music together in a more structured way as they play the drums that they have made themselves. They play traditional rhymes such as "Ring-a-ring-a-roses" with great pleasure and enjoyment. In reception they show adept understanding of how to use long and short notes when singing "I am a music man" together. They accompany one another very accurately as they use bells along with their voices as they sing joyfully.

ENGLISH

80. The results of the 2000 SATs for both seven-year-olds and eleven-year-olds were well above the national average and well above average in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The inspection findings reflect this picture; the standards in all strands of English are well above average in both key stages.

81. The school has made significant improvement in English since the last time that it was inspected. There are excellent strategies in place for teaching literacy skills, which enable pupils to make very good progress. The pupils with special educational needs and those from homes where English is not the first language are making very good progress in relation to their prior attainment in English due to the well-planned support they receive and the clear targets they are set for improvement.

82. The school has effective review processes, which include careful analysis of assessment data which use put to good use, for example in identifying and then tackling weaknesses apparent in writing. Resources are targeted very well to maximise learning opportunities for all pupils and the overall quality of English teaching is very good. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support pupils' work. Pupils work very hard at acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding throughout the school day and are conscientious about completing homework. The next step in English is for the good work begun in targeting individual achievement to be developed throughout the school and extended to involve pupils and parents in the review process.

83. At the end of both key stages standards of attainment in speaking and listening skills are well above average. Year 2, pupils listen well to their teacher and make confident and relevant contributions in class discussions. In a lesson based upon a text called "A Snowy Day", one child was very quickly able to define "stacking" as "putting things in a pile". Year 6 pupils listened with concentration in a fast moving and demanding lesson and asked relevant questions such as "What does bias mean?" Generally, pupils use appropriate language and tone and communicate clearly when answering their teachers' questions. In the reception class the clear focus on developing pupils speaking and listening skills in all areas of the curriculum provides a good foundation for development. Progress is very good throughout the school though opportunities for challenging pupils to explore ideas and justify choices are often missed. In lessons in Key Stage 2 pupils are not encouraged sufficiently to comment on each others views or ideas and debate points of interest; this has a limiting effect on some pupils' progress.

84. Attainment in reading at the end of both key stages is well above the national average. In Year 2 the majority of pupils really enjoy reading and read their books with a high level of accuracy and with good expression. They can talk fluently about the parts of stories that they enjoy most and the types of books they prefer. They use the content page of non-fiction books to find information with confidence. Most pupils regularly take their books home and read to a member of their family. Many Year 6 pupils are skilful in analysing texts. In a lesson on report writing they showed that they knew how to select sentences and phrases to support both viewpoints in answer to the question "Should wild animals be kept in zoos?". Pupils reading skills develop systematically as they move through the school. They are given opportunities to use library books for researching topics in other subjects such as history; this supports the very good progress that pupils make.

85. At the end of both key stages attainment in writing is well above average. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils are able to write short stories, with basic punctuation and simple spellings reasonably correct, without help from adults. They can write for a range of purposes in different lessons but few pupils include extended vocabulary and interesting ideas. They know how to label diagrams and complete charts but are not producing a sufficient range of creative writing using their own imagination. The majority of Year 6 pupils are able to plan their writing and structure it in a logical manner. They have a good understanding of grammar and write with effect in a variety of forms and for different audiences. They have less experience of sustained creative work or research for real purposes. The quality of handwriting and the standard of presentation are very high generally throughout the school. The progress that pupils make in developing their writing skills is very good in both key stages. In Year 4 for example pupils are learning how to write a newspaper report. They are developing their understanding of key features of this kind of writing, and experimenting with

language to write catchy headlines such as “Kidnapped Kid” and “Head Horror”. In her reporting, one pupil uses the phrase ”a deafening shrill scream” to give dramatic effect.

86. Pupils' attitudes to language and literacy are very good throughout the school. In both key stages pupils have very positive attitudes to developing their skills and extending their knowledge and understanding of English. The majority of pupils are attentive; they concentrate well and stay on task and work very hard. Pupils show respect for each other and for the staff and they care for materials and classroom equipment well. Many pupils have very good co-operation skills and excellent relationships with each other.

87. The quality of English teaching is very good overall. The teaching of basic skills is very secure. There is careful planning across the school to ensure that all pupils whatever their level of attainment have sufficiently challenging tasks in English and the opportunity to use their literacy skills in other subjects. For example, higher attaining pupils in the reception class are learning to use a dictionary and those in Year 2 have researched information about evacuation in the war. Teachers in both key stages have high expectations of pupils but this is particularly so in Years 4, 5, and 6. In these lessons learning objectives are shared with pupils so that they know very clearly what their teacher expects them to achieve within a given time. Specific learning objectives are referred to consistently by the teacher in interactions with pupils, the pace is brisk, and progress is reviewed at the end of the lesson. In class lessons teachers provide appropriate support for pupils in the lowest attaining group and give focussed verbal feedback on their work to all pupils. The use of specific targets is at an early stage of development but generally older pupils are encouraged to evaluate and improve their own work. Lesson objectives are used to assess pupils' learning and form the basis of marking and praise. In Year 6 the quality of marking is particularly good. Pupils are given very clear information about how to improve their work. All teachers give clear instructions to their class, use resources effectively, and have very good relationships with pupils.

88. The English co-ordinator and the head teacher provide clear leadership and direction for the subject. The analysis of school and national assessment data is used very well to monitor the progress of year groups and target resources to remedy areas of concern. Additional resources for example, are deployed very efficiently to supporting pupils in Year 3 and 4 with additional literacy work based on aiding their phonological awareness. All pupils benefit from the thoughtful planning, excellent support strategies, and good quality materials provided for them.

MATHEMATICS

89. Evidence from the inspection shows attainment in mathematics to be well above average by the time the pupils leave the school. The results in the SATs for eleven-year-olds in 2000 were also well above average. This represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection when standards were above average.

90. Bearing in mind the average levels of ability in numeracy when children enter the school, and their well above average attainment by the time they leave, all pupils are making very good progress through the school in this subject. The pupils with special educational needs and those from homes where English is not the first language are also making very good progress in relation to their prior attainment in mathematics due to the well-planned support they receive and the clear targets they are set for improvement. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support work in mathematics.

91. By the time they are eleven the pupils are well above average for their age in their ability to use number, and standards of numeracy are well above average. They do calculations very quickly and accurately in their heads. For example, most of the pupils in Year 6 are able to complete quite complex calculations rapidly such as 7 cubed plus 2. Although most pupils apply their knowledge to new situations well, the teachers sometimes miss opportunities to reinforce this aspect as fully as they might. They often ask the question, “How did you work that out?”, but this is not followed often enough by the subsidiary question, “Did anyone find a different way?” or even, “How many ways can you think of to work this out?”.

92. The pupils’ knowledge of shapes and measures is well above average at age eleven. Even at this early stage of the year most of the pupils in Year 6 correctly place co-ordinates in four quadrants. By the end of the year they work out accurate scale drawings, using their knowledge of ratio and proportion. Their knowledge of data handling is also well above average. Analysis of the books from last year shows pupils interpreting and drawing a wide variety of graphs.

93. The SATs for last year show attainment at the age of seven to be very high. Evidence from the inspection shows attainment at present to be above average at this age. All pupils make good progress in this key stage. By the time they are seven the pupils are well above average for their age in their ability to use number, and standards of numeracy are well above average. Most of the pupils in Year 2 can already quickly see whether an addition to 20 is right or wrong, even if there are more than two figures to add. Although most pupils can apply their knowledge to new situations quite well, opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce this aspect as fully as they might. The teachers do not always encourage the pupils to think of alternative strategies for calculating. The pupils’ knowledge of shapes and measures is not as well developed as their ability with number. Most pupils have good understanding of measuring using standard measures and know the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes.

94. The pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and show very good levels of concentration. A good feature of their response is the way that they settle quickly to group work even if they are not being directly supervised. They also co-operate effectively in their work when required. The pupils treat resources with respect and relationships are very good in the classrooms. The very good quality of the pupils’ attitudes to their work has a positive effect on the very good progress that they make.

95. The quality of teaching in mathematics observed during the inspection was very good overall. The best teaching was in upper junior classes where more precise match of work and tight assessment is enabling most pupils to maximise the time they spend working in lessons to make better than expected gains in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics. Excellent attention to promoting number skills right from nursery is resulting in pupils becoming very numerate by the time they leave school. All teachers are planning in line with the National Numeracy Strategy and their short-term plans are generally thorough. The teachers manage their classes very well and create an orderly environment in which the pupils find it easy to learn. Occasionally, there is too much fuss and chatter in lower juniors but not at the expense of effective learning overall. Lessons are very well structured and the teachers use a good balance of instruction and activity to retain the pupils’ interest. Good use is often made of specific computer programs to support work that younger pupils are doing in number work.

96. However, there are occasions when the objectives that teachers set for the pupils' learning in lessons are too general, and do not show the learning that is to take place by different groups. This tends to be the case in infant classes rather than junior classes. In Year 6 the teachers have begun to use target setting in a more focused way to support both teaching and learning. The practice that occasionally happens of pupils copying the objective for the lesson into their books is not a good use of time, though the sharing and pursuit of the objective during the lesson is, as pupils gain better insights into what they are expected to learn. There were very few examples seen during the inspection of teachers re-visiting the objectives they had set during the plenary sessions. The most successful lessons ended with a very valuable review of what had been learnt and this helped to give the pupils a greater understanding of their own learning.

97. In the context of this good teaching, there are occasions when the teachers do not provide work at an appropriate level for all the pupils in their classes. For example, worksheets are sometimes used which do not allow some pupils to progress at their optimum pace. There are also too many occasions when all the pupils start with the same work, when it would be more appropriate for a number to start at a higher level. Marking does not always give pupils helpful guidance as to what they need to do to improve and seldom does it draw on the personal targets set for individual pupils or groups of pupils in mathematics.

98. Tests are used regularly to assess the pupils' attainments and the results are being recorded to enable the teachers to track their progress. This is good practice, and is beginning to provide a very useful bank of information to help the teachers to plan for each pupil's learning. Individual short-term targets for improvement are not yet being set consistently for each child, so this good practice does not yet further enhance knowledge of each pupil's progress.

99. The numeracy strategy has been very effectively implemented and the school recognises its value in raising standards, particularly of mental calculation. The co-ordinator has worked very hard to maintain the very good standards being achieved. He has undertaken class observations that have proved beneficial to gaining oversight of the standards being attained at each stage. He has also carried out some very valuable analysis of the National Curriculum test results and as a result has identified general weaknesses which he has provided training on so that the teachers can begin to address these.

SCIENCE

100. In the previous inspection report the standards in science were found to be in line with the national average for seven-year-olds and above the national average for eleven-year-olds. Standards at both stages have improved since then. A good focus on enabling pupils to learn through practical and investigative research is paying off in the confidence with which pupils approach scientific enquiry. The rising standards and both teachers and pupils' enjoyment in science lessons are testament to the success of the management of the subject. The next step for management is to examine how target setting used to support high levels of achievement in English and mathematics could transfer to aid learning in science.

101. The 2000 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 indicate that, by the age of seven, pupils' attainment in science is above the national average. The results of the SATs at Key Stage 2 are well above average when compared to schools nationally. This matched the

teachers' estimations of achievement. Trends over time have shown continuing improvement. There is little variation between the results of girls and boys in science.

102. Inspection evidence confirms this picture of standards being above at the end of Key Stage 1 and well above at the end of Key Stage 2. The current focus upon Attainment Target 1 so that pupils are being given ample opportunities to carry out experiments and investigations of strands of science work supports them well in developing their knowledge and understanding. The activities in science are appropriately matched to all pupils' abilities, including those pupils with special educational needs and who do not speak English as the first language.

103. In infant classes, pupils have ample opportunities to build successfully upon the practical experiences developed in the Foundation Stage classes. In Year 1 they study materials and their properties when they experiment with magnets. They work in four different groups once they have talked about the properties together. They are highly motivated as they make a fishing game or discover the things that do and do not magnetise from a wide range of materials. This makes the various forms of recording that they do of their findings more meaningful for them. In Year 2 the investigative experiences continue for them. They begin to find out about electric circuits by building some themselves whilst others look at the safety requirements of electricity in their homes. They record findings neatly whether it is written or illustrative recording. They talk with accuracy about their findings before recording because they have the confidence to do so as they have had the practical experiences that they need to have.

104. The focus on investigation continues in the junior classes. At the same time they begin to refine their recording systems that confirm their growth in knowledge and understanding of scientific processes. In Year 4 when they consider forces They "fair test" gravity's air resistance measurements by making their own parachutes in pairs or small groups and timing how long it takes parachutes made from different materials to land. They then decide how they will record this complex process with accuracy to complement their testing. In Year 5 they return to considering materials and their properties and make expert use of previous knowledge gained in infant classes as they find out about things that do and do not dissolve. They talk and listen carefully to one another as they research the process and record with skill. By the end of the key stage they are able to reinforce knowledge and understanding of electricity to a depth that clearly sets them on the pathway of being expert scientists. They make excellent use of scientific language to confirm their high level of understanding of conductors and insulators. They are able to use drawings and symbols as well as writing to describe their findings in an appropriate scientific format.

105. Progress is very good across both infant and junior classes for all pupils. Pupils' learning is particularly well developed through their involvement in the comprehensive range of practical activities. They show high levels of concentration in their tasks because they are so interested in what they are doing. They are often completely absorbed in their tasks and do not want to leave them at an incomplete stage in consequence. They compare findings with one another, giving credence to one another's viewpoints, before reaching final decisions and so give support to one another's learning. By the time that pupils are in Year 6 and they have worked together over a considerable period of time they have developed excellent working relationships which has a positive impact upon the progress achieved.

106. Attitudes to learning in science are very good at both key stages. They gain maximum benefit from collaborative work, which is a regular, positive feature of science activities. They are keen to develop their scientific knowledge and understanding as a result of these attitudes. They are very happy to share their findings with one another in whole class discussions that often draw learning together at the end of lessons.

107. The quality of teaching is very good across both infant and junior classes. In Year 6 it is excellent as pupils are encouraged to become scientists who come to conclusions as a result of experimenting and exploring a range of possibilities. The level of challenge observed in one lesson was encouraging a handful of pupils to work at a very high level in science and in some aspects within the Year 7 programme of study. Teachers' mark books saved from last year revealed that assessment of pupils' levels of attainment in Year 6 does not exceed level 5, which is surprising given the potential for level 6 attainment observed during this inspection so early in the first term. There is generally secure subject knowledge and so teachers feel able to let pupils explore in an open way in order to draw suitable conclusions to their experiments. It is only through such confidence that teachers can demonstrate their high expectations to pupils. Teachers plan in detail and can move learning on at a brisk pace. They ask open ended, challenging questions of pupils that constantly move learning forward as the experiments are taking place. Support from both support staff and teachers is well deployed to ensure that all pupils are benefiting from the opportunities being given to expand scientific knowledge and understanding.

108. The subject is very well led by a keen and well-informed co-ordinator. She analyses what is being achieved very carefully and identifies strengths and weaknesses accurately. Currently, assessment in science is carried out at the end of specifically planned units of work. There is limited use of target setting at the class or pupil level to support the institutional targets agreed with the local education authority. The policy and scheme of work is appropriately meeting National Curriculum and Curriculum 2000 requirements. The co-ordinator is able to give such a positive leadership to the subject because she is able to monitor work on a regular weekly basis. The co-ordinator controls the budget for science and so the good resources, which are centrally stored and readily accessible, are up-dated on a regular and appropriate basis.

ART AND DESIGN

109. Standards were judged to be sound at the last inspection and these have been maintained at this level in both key stages. The subject is planned for appropriately in all classes. Pupils enjoy a good variety of art and design experiences and have opportunities to use a range of materials in lessons. They make satisfactory progress as they move up through the school. In the few lessons observed during this inspection many pupils made good progress in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills.

110. In the nursery and reception class pupils are able to use a variety of materials successfully including paint, card, fabric, wool etc to create cards, pictures and collages with the guidance of staff. They are also encouraged to take decisions about what to paint and which colours are most suitable for their subject. In Key Stage 1 there is good progress in drawing technique for example Year 1 pupils used crayon pencils to draw detailed plans of a park and Year 2 pupils made carefully observed drawings of their mum which they mounted themselves.

111. In Key Stage 2 pupils are confident in experimenting with a variety of techniques and materials. Pupils can express what they have seen in imaginative ways for example in a Year 3 lesson, pupils use photographs to inspire their chalk and pastel pictures of animals. The higher attaining pupils show good progress in investigating techniques such as blending to create particular effects such as movement and distance. Art supports work in other subject areas very well, for example Year 5 pupils made effective pencil drawings of interior and exterior features of Selly Manor on a visit there recently. The work of artists and designers such as Monet, Botticelli, Bronsino, and William Morris have been used to extend pupils knowledge and understanding of art and design,

112. Pupils respond very well to the range of opportunities provided for them in art lessons. They enjoy their activities and show interest in their work and improving their skills. Pupils work diligently and show appreciation of each other's efforts. They treat materials and equipment with respect.

113. On the basis of the small number of lessons observed the quality of teaching in both key stages is judged to be good. Older pupils though do not have enough opportunity in lessons to talk about how they feel about their own work and comment upon the work of others. Although a wide variety of experiences are provided for pupils in lessons there is scope for enriching the curriculum further through visits and visitors to the school; a visit to the new Walsall Art Gallery has not yet been programmed, for example. The school has appropriate plans for developing this subject within time allocations. Management of art and design is satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

114. Standards were judged to be average at the end of both key stages at the last inspection. These standards have been maintained. There were only a few opportunities to see design and technology lessons during the inspection. Further evidence was gained by looking at a photograph portfolio of pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils. Pupils make sound progress over time and good progress in the lessons observed because of good teaching. Teaching in the lessons observed was good overall.

115. In Key Stage 1 pupils design and make products using a variety of junk materials. They are able to assemble and join in a variety of ways to make their models. In Year 1 pupils made large size models of people, transport and animals. They can talk through their ideas and explain why they have made particular choices. In the reception class some pupils make "hamburgers" under the direction of a member of staff. A wide variety of materials are provided and there are choices to be made about what exactly they want in their hamburger; some choose to print cucumber slices and others tomatoes. These are then cut out and assembled with other contents in a "bap". Good progress is made in handling tools and materials.

116. Key Stage 2 pupils also experience a range of activities. In Year 5 pupils are able to draft a design brief for a moving vehicle. Plans show a variety of ideas including a people carrier, a caravan and a hovercraft with varying level of detail. There was no written evaluation of their designs at the stage observed but space is built into their planner for evaluation when pupils' models are completed. Pupils use boxes, card, correx, dowel and wooden wheels to construct their models. Progress is good. They show developing awareness of the practical constraints of some materials and ways of fastening as they try to fix their axles to their chassis. A parent helper ably assists in the lesson and supervises the road testing of the vehicles in the corridor. The reasons for the second attempt being better than the first is discussed in detail by pupils. They work safely and share resources responsibly.

117. Pupils say they enjoy this subject and are keen to explain how they completed previous design and technology tasks. They are pleased with their finished products.

118. There is sound management of this subject. The co-ordinator for design and technology has ensured that appropriate guidance is available for colleagues and that

resources are accessible. The subject has a secure place in the curriculum; time limitations are sometimes overcome by linking activities to art and design and to school events such as the Juniors' summer party. Pupils have a worthwhile experience of design and technology as they move up through the school.

GEOGRAPHY

119. During the four years since its last inspection, the school has maintained the strengths in geography identified in that report and standards are now above average. Because the subject is taught well, all pupils make good progress, including those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.

120. Pupils build their knowledge and skills of geography at a good rate through the school. The youngest pupils learn about the areas around their homes and the school and as they grow older their knowledge of other places increases well. Pupils in the juniors understand how human and physical factors influence the landscape in Britain, Europe and further afield. They begin to explain how places differ and to identify similarities and Year 6 pupils have good understanding of some of the ethical issues surrounding human activity in rainforests and other sensitive areas.

121. The teaching of geography is good throughout the school. Teachers plan systematically and have good expectations of what their pupils can achieve. The identification of exactly what will be learned in lessons in planning is not as sharp as it could be and marking does not always identify ways in which pupils can improve their work. Nonetheless, lessons are interesting, well motivating and sessions of lively learning. Pupils respond to such learning opportunities well. They concentrate well, work hard and produce a lot of good quality work. A key feature of learning is the good development of research skills as pupils use a variety of resources to help them find out more about the world and its peoples. It is clear to the visitor to geography lessons that pupils are interested, well behaved and grow in maturity as they move through the school.

122. The curriculum for geography is good. The topics studied are developed systematically to enable pupils to make consistently good progress. The use of information and communication technology in geography could be enhanced beyond the satisfactory level currently in force. Geography is a well managed subject, though the monitoring of teaching, learning and standards is not yet at the level found in some other subjects in school. There is a good climate for improvement amongst the committed staff team and geography is in a good position to more than meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum.

HISTORY

123. History is a strength of the school and is popular amongst teachers and pupils alike. Because of this shared enthusiasm, the subject has maintained and strengthened its position in the curriculum since the previous inspection and standards and progress are now good through the school

124. History lessons are clearly sessions when everyone works hard to find out about the past. Teachers plan learning experiences where pupils are expected to find things out for themselves. Pupils in the infants use books, pictures, *old fashioned* objects, visits and

discussions with *old* people (aged 25 and above!) to discover what life was like before they were born. Year 2 pupils begin to make good comparisons between life in World War 2 and in 2000. They are fascinated by wartime diet and rationing and *enjoy* sampling traditional

recipes. In their writing, these pupils explain why they would not like to be an evacuee child and single out their own families and television as things they would miss most.

125. Junior pupils develop good insights into what history is as well as what history is about. They use a range of documentary evidence and artefacts to further their knowledge of past periods. There is some good use of computers, particularly CD ROM in this work, though there could be even more. Pupils' research and study skills are built well and by the age of eleven, most pupils can explain why some sources are not as reliable as others. Junior pupils have good understanding of chronology, though they do not use dates very much. Some very good historical writing is displayed in many classes and gifted pupils are mostly set taxing tasks that challenge their ingenuity.

126. From this, it is evident that the teaching of history is good and that pupils make the most of their learning. Some very good teaching of history takes place which fosters active learning well. The pupils' capability for focused concentration, good effort and productive working is used to advantage by teachers. The quality of presentation and the occasional inclination to copy blocks of text are two elements of learning that staff could encourage pupils to improve.

127. History is a well-managed subject and all staff are committed to improvement. The co-ordinator knows much about the strengths and weaknesses of the subject but there has yet to be much direct monitoring in lessons. Despite this, the prospects for history remaining a key subject in school are good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

128. In the four years since the previous inspection, school managers have worked hard to make improvements to information and communication technology. Investment in better resources, the development of the curriculum and improvements to teaching and learning have all enabled the school to keep up with the rate of change in the subject. However, the school acknowledges that the subject requires continued enhancement and has therefore kept it as a central priority for improvement.

129. Many pupils have computers at home and they show secure skill levels in manipulating the mouse and keyboard. Where possible, homework is used to advance pupils' research skills using their home computer but staff know that not all pupils have such advantages and there is firm focus on building skills and knowledge in the subject in lessons. The level of resourcing, two computers per classroom on the whole, sometimes inhibits the speed with which all pupils can learn and practise these things. Nonetheless, staff do not let this prevent pupils having some good opportunities to learn, such is their determination.

130. A strength of the subject is the way in which ICT learning is versed in the study of other subjects. Thus, some good use of computers takes place in English, science, geography and history. In this way, basic skills, particularly writing, are boosted well. The co-ordinator is keen to extend such opportunities and the purchase of a number of lap top computers is designed to give more pupils more chances to put their skills to good use in researching information across the curriculum. There are already firm plans for how these new computers will be used in this way and the prospects of improvement to pupils' skills and knowledge is good.

131. Teachers use the limited number of computers well and teach the subject effectively. Lesson planning is generally well focused on the skills and knowledge to be learned, though targets for learning based on these objectives are used inconsistently to help pupils make the maximum amount of progress. Pupils respond well on the whole and they build skills and knowledge at the expected rate. School managers are determined to improve the overall rate of progress and have long-term plans for the expansion of resources, and possible creation of more space to house them, to provide greater opportunities for skills practise and extension. They aim to give pupils more (and concentrated) sessions using computers and other technology to help them communicate more powerfully and effectively and to ensure that the curriculum is of the total breadth and balance as seen in the best of the other subjects in school. Currently, the curriculum, is satisfactory and covers all the necessary strands of the subject, but managers are keen to seize the opportunities better levels of resourcing bring.

132. Because the subject is well managed, it is well poised for improvement. The staff are determined not to let the relative lack of resources impact on the standards achieved and they share the good drive for enhancement shown by the subject co-ordinator. On-going work to broaden the curriculum and improve assessment is already showing signs of success as staff identify and use more opportunities to use information and communication technology in their lessons. There is good support for such initiatives and the prospects for strengthening the subject are very promising.

MUSIC

133. A limited number of lessons were seen during the inspection, however it was clear that there has been good improvement since the time of the previous inspection. Standards in music seen are good in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2. All pupils make very good progress in this subject. Since the last inspection these standards have improved significantly. The younger pupils add their own rhythmical accompaniments to songs, keeping extremely accurate time, and are even able to follow simple notation. Singing is good throughout the school, being joyful, enthusiastic and tuneful. A highlight of a Year 6 music lesson was a two-part warm-up song, which was sung with some panache. Evidence that some of the older pupils compose and record their compositions using standard notation was seen, and the taped end result of their millennium composition was enjoyed. These compositions show very good attainment.

134. Music features strongly in assemblies and the singing is well pitched, with a warm, joyful vocal tone and clear diction. The pupils enter and leave assembly to music, chosen from the school's collection of recorded music. The opportunity is also taken to discuss the music being played and focus on musical terminology such as 'duration' and 'pitch'. This significantly broadens the pupils' knowledge of music and musicians. Their music sessions impact significantly on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. However, there is an insufficient use of recorded music from other genres and cultures, other than Western classical music.

135. The pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and overall their behaviour is also very good. They enjoy making music and the strong school choral singing and orchestra have had many opportunities to perform out of school, for example at masses at the Catholic Church, at a Rotary Club senior citizens party and at a schools millennium celebration at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham.

136. The music co-ordinator has made a positive impact on the learning of music through her enthusiasm. Only a small number of lessons were observed, and from that small sample the quality of teaching was judged as very good. The teaching of music is significantly enhanced because the music co-ordinator is able to take the top three year-groups for their music. Her specialist knowledge enables these pupils' learning to benefit significantly. The school has also made the very good decision to involve the Walsall Music Service in instrumental tuition; this contributes significantly to the provision in this subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

137. Standards are in line with the national expectations at the end of both key stages. The pupils make satisfactory progress. This represents satisfactory maintenance of standards since the last inspection.

138. At Key Stage 2, in a lesson in Year 4 the pupils successfully develop their teamwork and most have good awareness of the use of space, although their skills of passing and catching are less well developed. In Year 5, the pupils successfully perform dance routines to music, developing their work in a stately and majestic way to signify the Tudor period of British history. In their movements the pupils show appropriate variation of speed, level and direction. The pupils in Years 3, 5 and 6 classes attend swimming lessons for part of the year. All become suitably confident in the water and by the end of Year 6 a significant majority of the pupils are able to swim in excess of twenty-five metres unaided and have good life-saving skills development. In Year 3 the pupils show appropriate ability to balance on small points, but their ability to link these balances is less well developed. At Key Stage 1, the pupils move confidently around the hall, showing suitable awareness of space and other pupils. In a dance lesson in Year 2 they showed appropriate ability when creating a story from music. In a Year 1 gymnastics lesson, the pupils showed good control of their bodies when travelling on apparatus.

139. The overall quality of teaching and learning observed was good. The teachers plan well and they provide a good range of resources. Clear instruction is generally provided and this allows all pupils to make satisfactory gains in their learning of skills. Members of staff change appropriately for lessons and they join in and demonstrate for the pupils. They have sound subject knowledge and make suitable demands of the pupils' performance. The pupils join in appropriately, showing enthusiasm and enjoyment and making a good physical effort. Lessons are generally conducted at a brisk pace, with the pupils being kept busy throughout. The teachers often take the opportunity to use pupils to demonstrate good practice, but opportunities are sometimes missed to discuss the quality of the work seen, which would help the pupils identify the areas where they might improve themselves. The teachers provide help and support to pupils, in all aspects of their work and in particular they emphasise the need for safety. In turn, the pupils show good attitudes, behave very well overall, work well alone and with a partner or group and carry equipment carefully and safely.

140. The co-ordinator has worked hard to create a good scheme of work for the subject, and this is having a positive impact on the pupils' learning. There is a good range of out of school sporting activities, and the school has been successful in a range of local and regional sporting events.

141. Religious education was not inspected as this is a voluntary aided church school and a separate inspection will be undertaken.