

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MILKING BANK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Dudley, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103834

Headteacher: Mr R Mason

Reporting inspector: Mrs J P Hicks  
2063

Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> May 2000

Inspection number: 191299

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Aintree Way  
Milking Bank  
Dudley  
West Midlands

Postcode: DY1 2SL

Telephone number: 01384 816695

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Miss J Harvey

Date of previous inspection: July 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Judith Hicks	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology	How high are standards? The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught?
Eric Langford	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Andrew Bond	Team inspector	Mathematics Art	How well is the school led and managed?
Rod Bristow	Team inspector	Geography History	Supporting inspection of leadership and management
Jo Greer	Team inspector	Science Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Kathleen Smith	Team inspector	English Physical education Special educational needs Equal opportunities	
Megan Spark	Team inspector	Areas of learning for the under-fives Music Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Milking Bank Primary School, which was opened just over ten years ago, serves an extensive new housing development in a pleasant suburb of Dudley. Pupil numbers have built up in recent years and the school is over-subscribed in most year-groups. The neighbourhood is relatively advantaged and only 4% of pupils are known to be entitled to free school meals, well below the national average. Most of the pupils come from white families with a background in the UK, but a small number come from minority ethnic groups. Although some of these pupils live in bilingual households, only three are at a relatively early stage in learning English. Milking Bank is much larger than most primary schools in England. It currently caters for 423 boys and girls aged from four to eleven in the main school, and an additional 60 children attend the nursery on a part-time morning or afternoon basis. Children are admitted to one of the reception classes in two annual intakes, shortly before their fifth birthday. Attainment on admission is slightly above average for Dudley LEA and above the national average, but is not as high as the free school meals figures would suggest. There are 70 pupils on the register of special educational needs (SEN), a broadly average proportion compared with other schools. Two of the pupils have serious problems requiring a statement of SEN and a further three are awaiting statutory assessment for a statement.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is an improving school which is becoming increasingly effective. Standards are rising but more could be achieved, especially in Key Stage 1. Teaching during the inspection was thoroughly sound, with many good lessons in some year-groups. Strong leadership by the headteacher and senior staff is producing tangible results and helping to increase the progress the pupils make. Taking into account the level of resources available and the standards achieved, the school is judged to provide sound value for money.

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

- The headteacher and senior staff are taking effective action to monitor teaching and learning in order to raise standards.
- Standards are good in information and communication technology throughout the school, with particularly high levels of attainment by the time pupils are seven.
- There is good, balanced coverage of each subject of the curriculum, and a high calibre programme of personal and health education.
- The school has a friendly, positive atmosphere. From the nursery onwards, staff look after the children very well and relationships are strong.
- The standard of pupils' behaviour is very high.
- Resources are managed very effectively. In particular the accommodation and grounds have been well maintained and imaginatively developed.

#### **What could be improved**

- The pupils' speaking and listening skills do not match their achievements in other areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils do not make as much progress in reading and writing as they could by the age of seven, taking into account their attainment on entry and achievement in the reception year.
- Although most teaching is at least satisfactory, some lessons are still not sufficiently challenging for all the pupils.
- Pupils' progress suffers when they are taught a number of subjects at the same time on the basis of rotating groups.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in July 1996. Since then the role of subject co-ordinators has been strengthened effectively and arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning have been introduced, in line with two of the key issues. The school has tried hard to meet the needs of more able pupils, a further issue raised in 1996, by measures such as setting the older pupils by ability for mathematics. Some staff now cater systematically for high attainers in their lesson planning, but there are still occasions when lessons are not challenging enough. A final key issue in 1996 concerned arrangements for 'rotational teaching', a system whereby groups work side by side on different activities in some sessions. These arrangements have now been phased out in most year-groups, but where they survive they tend to over-stretch staff and limit the progress made. Standards have improved broadly in line with the national pattern over the last four years, but this was from a starting point in 1996 that was lower than it should have been. Following marked improvements in 1998 and 1999, the ground has now been made up in mathematics, where pupils' attainment is now above average at seven and well above by eleven. There is still some way to go in English, despite the good progress being made by the older pupils, with a need to get off to a faster start in Key Stage 1. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved sharply following a programme of staff training and the acquisition of new equipment. Good progress has been made in upgrading the buildings and grounds. Overall progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with a lot accomplished in the last two years.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	D	D	C	D	well above average    A above average        B average                 C below average         D well below average    E
Mathematics	A	C	A	C	
Science	C	C	B	D	

As the table shows, the pupils' performance in last year's national assessments at eleven was well above the national average in mathematics, above average in science and broadly average in English. When comparisons are made with similar schools, the school is seen to have achieved the results that would be expected in mathematics, but not in English or science. In particular too few pupils gained a higher level (level 5 or above) in English. The picture now is similar to last year. There has been consolidation of improved standards in mathematics and science and steadily improving standards in English, but here there is further to go. Good standards are achieved in information and communication technology (ICT) and satisfactory standards in religious education. The older pupils achieve well in art, history and physical education, and in all other subjects progress is sound. Targets set by the Local Education Authority (LEA) for performance in English and mathematics at eleven have been too low in the past and are still not ambitious enough.

Performance in national assessments at seven has not been strong in recent years in comparison with similar schools. Reading and writing results were above the national average in 1999, but mathematics was only average. Teacher assessments last year showed that standards achieved by seven-year olds in speaking and listening and in science were below the national average. Inspection findings are that standards of reading and writing are now a little better than the national average at seven, but could be higher. Performance in mathematics has improved and is now above average, whilst attainment in science is broadly in line with other schools nationally. Standards in ICT at seven are very high, well above those found in most other schools, with satisfactory standards in religious education. Good progress is made in art and physical education, with steady achievement in all other subjects.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The pupils listen to their teachers attentively and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in classrooms, in the hall and outside during breaks. There have been no exclusions for many years.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Many pupils display a natural sensitivity and awareness to the needs of others, including younger children and those with physical or learning difficulties.
Attendance	Good, with very low rates of unauthorised absence.

Pupils' very good behaviour and positive attitudes contribute to the progress they make.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall, consistently so in some year-groups. 95% of the lessons seen were satisfactory or better, of which well over half were good or better and 13% very good. At the other end of the scale, 5% were judged unsatisfactory. Staff have a secure grasp and develop basic skills in literacy and mathematics, and their knowledge and expertise is almost always sound or good in each subject they teach. This includes ICT, where recent training has brought considerable benefits. Teaching in English is good overall, and has been strengthened by the effective introduction of the national literacy strategy. Mathematics teaching is thoroughly competent, with the national numeracy strategy also successfully implemented. Strengths of the teaching include careful planning, which at best includes suitable provision for the most capable pupils in the class as well as support for those with special educational needs. Where lessons are not so successful, there is not enough to interest and challenge the pupils, their level of understanding is under-estimated and the pace is too slow. Pupils' learning generally reflects the quality of teaching, but sometimes they learn better than would be anticipated because of their willingness and good behaviour. The pupils are capable of hard work when this is demanded and show independence when seeking out information.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a broad and well-balanced curriculum, and is well prepared to introduce new National Curriculum requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is efficiently organised. These pupils are well supported and make good progress.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Sound provision is made for spiritual development through collective worship and religious education. Good provision for moral and social development; a sense of responsibility towards the school community is effectively developed. Sound cultural provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils is very good and a strength of the school.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements in full. Strengths include the development of health education and regular provision for personal and social education. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities. Provision for the under-fives is good, with a particularly stimulating learning environment in the nursery.

Arrangements for monitoring pupils' personal development, behaviour and attendance are very good. The school has effective systems for tracking academic progress. There are good opportunities for parents to become fully involved in their child's education.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong and highly effective leadership. The deputy head works closely and successfully with him to shape the direction of the school. The senior management team and subject co-ordinators also make a positive contribution to school development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effectively led and organised. Through a system of well-managed committees, it is fully involved in decision-taking.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Senior staff make good use of a range of data to analyse the school's performance. Effective systems have been introduced to monitor work in the classroom.
The strategic use of resources	Highly effective. Financial planning is good and very good use is made of grant funding and new technology to support development.

The high quality of school leadership and management is helping to move the school forward. The school has an adequate number of well-trained teaching and classroom support staff. Learning resources are good, with very good ICT resources. School accommodation is of a very high standard.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost all children are happy and like coming to school.</li> <li>• Standards of behaviour are good.</li> <li>• Staff expect the pupils to work hard and do their best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minority of parents are dissatisfied with the quality of information about their child's progress.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree about the features which most please parents. General information to parents is of a high quality. Pupils' annual reports, although meeting requirements, sometimes lack detail about pupils' achievements and do not often identify areas for improvement.

### PART B: COMMENTARY

## HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

### The school's results and achievements

1 In 1999, the pupils' performance in national assessments at eleven was well above the national average in mathematics, above average in science and broadly average in English. When comparisons are drawn with similarly advantaged schools, these results were well in line with what would be expected in mathematics, but below average in English and science. In particular, too few pupils gained a higher level (level 5) in English. This was nevertheless an improvement on the two previous years, when there was clear under-attainment in English, with results falling below even national levels. Mathematics results also improved markedly between 1998 and 1999 and in science a downward trend was reversed. Taking the four years since 1996 as a whole, standards have improved in line with national results. This is because of marked improvement recently rather than a steady upward trend.

2 The general picture at the end of Key Stage 2 now is similar to last year. There has been consolidation of the high standards achieved in mathematics and improved standards in science. Standards in English are improving steadily, but are still not significantly above the national average. Targets agreed with the LEA for performance in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 have been too low in the past and are still not ambitious enough.

3 Performance in national assessments at seven has not been strong in recent years in comparison with similar schools. Reading and writing results were above the national average in 1999, but mathematics was only around the national average. Both reading and mathematics were below the levels achieved by comparable schools. Teacher assessments last year indicated that standards achieved by seven-year olds in speaking and listening and in science actually fell below the national average. Trends in Key Stage 1 results show a marked improvement over four years, but this is from a starting point that was far lower than it should have been in reading and mathematics in 1996.

4 Inspection findings are that standards of reading and writing are now above the national average at seven, but could be higher in view of the pupils' achievements on entry and during the reception year. Pupils' speaking skills are no better than average for the age-group. Performance in mathematics has improved since last year, and standards are now above the national average. Attainment in science has also risen and is broadly in line with other schools nationally.

5 Children enter the nursery with skills that are rather better than those of most three year-olds, especially in their readiness for learning. They make satisfactory progress through the nursery and reception classes, with good achievement in personal and social development and in more formal aspects of literacy and numeracy. As the children approach the age of five, their attainment is above average in listening skills, reading, writing and mathematics. In other areas of learning, including speaking, attainment is average and the children reach national targets for five-year olds.

6 Steady progress is made in speaking and listening at both key stages, but speaking skills do not match the pupils' achievements in other areas of learning. Towards the end of Key Stage 1 many pupils still lack fluency and need adult support to make a point clearly to the whole class. Older pupils have sound conversational skills and express their ideas confidently, but are not fully articulate when talking about themes in their reading books and other features of school life. On occasions progress in other subjects, such as science, is

slowed by limitations in the pupils' vocabulary. Pupils from homes where English is an additional language make progress that is sometimes better than that of other pupils. The very few who are at an early stage in their English language acquisition are sensitively supported by class teachers, and make good progress.

7 Standards of reading and writing are rather above national averages at seven and slightly above at eleven, but, after a good start in reception, the pupils do not progress as fast as they might in the early stages of Key Stage 1. Progress is good where there is direct instruction in technical skills such as phonics, spelling and handwriting and in regular guided reading sessions. Through work in the literacy hour, the pupils gain a good understanding of how books work, and are adept at finding information through use of the contents page and index. Progress in reading slows when pupils' reading books are not carefully matched to their stage of development; this especially affects average and below average readers. Reading improves in the final stages in Key Stage 2, and many of the older pupils read expressively and with understanding by the time they move on to the secondary phase. They are good at retrieving facts from books and computer-based sources. After a relatively slow start, the fluency of pupils' writing improves in Year 2, and pupils gain experience of a good range of information writing, poems, letters and descriptive pieces. Older pupils learn to set out formal reports and to make notes effectively, and have appropriate opportunities for extended narrative and imaginative writing. Handwriting develops satisfactorily, and most pupils present their work well. Boys do not make quite the same progress as girls in literacy, and the gap between the performance of boys and girls is slightly greater than average. Pupils with special educational needs have effective help in developing their literacy skills and achieve well.

8 Standards of mathematics are above average at the end of both key stages, and good progress is made. By the age of seven most pupils have a secure grasp and recall of basic mathematical facts to 20 and beyond. They add, subtract and multiply, and have started to understand the principles of place value. At eleven, the pupils know their multiplication tables, and work confidently with fractions and decimals, applying their understanding to solve everyday problems. High attainers are skilled in the use of calculators and have undertaken challenging work on averages. Numerical skills are applied effectively within other subjects of the curriculum, including science and geography. Girls have tended to achieve better in mathematics than boys in recent years. Pupils with special educational needs have well defined targets and make good progress in mathematics.

9 Standards are average for the age-group and achievement satisfactory in science by the end of Key Stage 1. Good progress is made through Key Stage 2, especially at the end of the key stage, and the older pupils are reaching above average standards. They have good factual recall and apply their scientific knowledge to tasks well, for example when deciding how to separate a mixture of different substances. Attainment is well above average in information and communication technology (ICT) by seven, and the younger pupils' independence and confidence in the use of computers is a strength. Older pupils also make good progress, and attainment in ICT is above average by eleven. The pupils use computers very effectively to present and analyse information, for example using spreadsheets to look at relationships between temperature and rainfall in geography. Standards in religious education match those set out in the locally Agreed Syllabus at the end of both key stages. The pupils develop a sound knowledge of key narratives from the Old and New Testaments by the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils discuss the teachings of major world faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism, and have a secure understanding of symbolism in religious traditions.

10 Achievement in each other subject of the curriculum is at least satisfactory. Better than average progress is made in art and physical education at both key stages.

Achievement in history is also above average in Key Stage 2, where the pupils develop above average skills of research and investigation.

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

11 From the nursery onwards, pupils enjoy coming to school, and display good attitudes to the school and to their work. Most listen well, work hard and are well-motivated learners. The pupils take good advantage of the visits and other 'extras' offered by the school, and there is a high level of uptake of extra-curricular activities. When teaching is challenging, the pupils work hard, sustain high levels of concentration during lessons and collaborate well with others in group or paired activities.

12 High standards of behaviour are a strength of the school. Very good behaviour is consistently seen in classrooms, corridors, the dining hall and the playground and serves to enhance the positive relationships between staff and pupils. The school's well-structured system of rewards and sanctions is clearly understood by the pupils and is seen to be fair. In classrooms, the pupils listen attentively to lesson introductions, even when long, and it is seldom necessary to give instructions more than once. They move into the hall for assemblies in a very sensible manner and show a respectful attitude during collective worship. Although the playground areas are approached by steep steps and slopes, the pupils behave responsibly and accidents are few.

13 The school has an excellent record of no pupil exclusions over the last five years. Staff work hard to implement the school's anti-bullying policy and to promote anti-racist attitudes, and are rightly proud to have recorded no incidents of this kind in the past year. Parents and pupils agree that the occasional outbreaks of verbal aggression or unkindness that do occur are swiftly and effectively resolved by staff.

14 A further strength of the school is the very good relationships that exist between pupils and between pupils and adults. Pupils are friendly and considerate towards each other, to staff and to visitors and demonstrate by their actions, and through conversations, that they know right from wrong. Many display a natural sensitivity and awareness to the needs of others, especially to those pupils with physical or learning difficulties. As a result, pupils with special educational needs are helped to play a full part in the life of the school, with no unhelpful comment. Good examples were seen of unsolicited assistance and support being offered to other pupils and adults alike.

15 The great majority of pupils collaborate well with each other in their learning, happily take turns without question, share willingly and treat property and learning resources with care. A particularly good example is of two reception children using all their fingers to add 12 plus 12 and who used their initiative to asked a third child to 'lend them more fingers' to help find the answer. The teacher promptly praised the children for working well together. In almost all lessons boys and girls choose to work together in a calm and friendly manner, although teachers occasionally have to re-arrange single-gender groups unobtrusively in physical education lessons.

16 The school provides pupils with a suitable range of opportunities for their individual development, many of which are adapted by class teachers to meet the needs of different age-groups. Pupils willingly accept and undertake their assigned responsibilities; however there are mixed levels of enthusiasm and commitment, especially when these tasks are viewed merely as classroom chores. The positive manner in which Year 6 pupils eagerly take up and perform the range of whole school responsibilities offered to them is worthy of note. In particular their close involvement with the younger pupils, including nursery children, and the guidance and support they provide in the classroom, dining hall and playground,

benefit all the pupils and enhance their learning. An ethos of care and consideration for others prevails throughout the school and makes a strong contribution to the pupils' social and personal development.

17 Levels of attendance are good and demonstrate a trend of continued improvement since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy coming to school and records show an excellent record of no unauthorised absences over the past five years. Punctuality within the school is very good and lessons all started well on time during the inspection week.

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

18 Teaching is good overall, consistently so in some age-groups, especially Year 6. As at the time of the last inspection, well over half the lessons seen were good or very good, and the overall quality of teaching has been well sustained since then. However, there is rather more unsatisfactory teaching than would be expected (5%) given the school's recent focus on teaching skills and the hard work put in by staff. During the inspection, 95% of the lessons seen were satisfactory or better, whilst 13% were judged to be very good. There were minor differences between the key stages, but good or very good lessons were seen throughout the school. At Key Stage 1 teaching was consistently satisfactory or better, but there were fewer lessons where teaching showed real flair than at Key Stage 2. On the other hand, there was more unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 2. Teaching in the nursery was mainly good, with a range from satisfactory to very good teaching in the reception classes.

19 Staff have a thoroughly secure grasp of how to teach and develop basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, although less consistent attention was given to the development of spoken language during the inspection. Technical vocabulary for talking about language is introduced and used effectively in most classes, but the teaching of correct mathematical terminology is not always strong. All teachers have been trained well in the management of the literacy and numeracy hours, which are planned and conducted in line with national strategies. This is contributing to improving standards. In the best English and mathematics sessions, teachers weigh up their pupils well, with high but realistic expectations about what can be achieved. Five-year olds in a reception lesson, for example, were skilfully introduced first to the digraph 'ch', then to the idea of listening for the middle sound in a regular three-phoneme word. Using individual white-boards the children were able to try out their spellings in an encouraging climate, which they did with a sense of growing excitement as they succeeded. Rapid progress was made and the children took real satisfaction in what they had achieved, which was reinforced by the teacher. Some highly effective direct teaching of computer skills was also observed, most notably in Year 2.

20 Some mathematics lessons, especially at the end of key stages, are characterised by a similarly high level of challenge, with particularly effective oral work at the start of sessions and a brisk pace which is sustained well throughout the lesson. Pupils in Year 6 are expected to work fast and productively, and they rise to these expectations, completing a good quantity of work over time. In less skilled hands, though, there is a tendency for the pace of the lesson to fall off after the introduction and, although teachers try to cater for individual requirements, there is not always enough to keep the brightest and most hard-working pupils busy. In the single unsatisfactory mathematics lesson observed the teacher did not have the measure of the pupils' understanding, at first using examples that were too easy, then failing to explain more difficult ideas clearly enough. The pupils were confused.

21 No unsatisfactory English teaching was seen, but as with mathematics, there was variation in quality; some otherwise satisfactory lessons were not demanding enough and were conducted at too relaxed a pace. In the early stages of Key Stage 1 pupils' progress in

reading and writing is affected to some extent by features of the school's literacy programme and reading books are not always accurately enough matched to the pupils' level of development.

22 Teachers' understanding of other subjects is mainly good. In the field of information and communication technology (ICT) staff have familiarised themselves with an entirely new computer system in a period of only a few months. The range of work covered and the standards now being achieved show very good understanding of the potential of the school's new equipment and software, which is reflected in high standards. ICT is increasingly used to support learning in many subjects. Teachers of the older junior pupils have a particularly secure understanding of the science curriculum. High levels of expertise were, for example, seen in a Year 6 lesson dealing with micro-organisms, when the teacher had the depth of knowledge to respond flexibly to probing questions and observations by pupils. Where the teacher's understanding is not as secure the level of challenge is sometimes relatively low, as in work seen on electricity. Good subject knowledge is found in most other areas of the curriculum. In an unsuccessful design and technology lesson, however, the teacher did not have a good enough understanding of the cutting skills which the pupils should be developing, and this limited achievement.

23 Teachers' careful planning and preparation before lessons is a positive feature. A lesson on soil analysis at Key Stage 2, for instance, owed its success to meticulous preparation. Joint planning within each year-group ensures that parallel classes have similar opportunities. Classroom support staff and any voluntary helpers are thoroughly briefed beforehand and their time is used effectively. In the nursery and reception classes collaborative planning is firmly established and nursery nurses make a lively contribution to teaching and learning, especially supporting children at different levels of maturity. Colleagues work well together, for example with the sessional pianist in some music lessons. Resources for learning are generally well chosen and are invariably to hand when needed. In a Year 1 history lesson effective use was made of interesting photographs of different generations, whilst cards with written 'prompts' helped the pupils to focus on salient points in a Year 2 music lesson.

24 Classroom management and organisation are usually at least sound, except when different activities are planned for four or five groups of pupils at a time. This presents logistical problems which slow down learning even when all the pupils are working on similar topics, as in Year 3 science. When as many as four different subjects are taught simultaneously under the so-called 'rotation' system even good teachers find themselves working very hard for limited returns. Pupils become restless during over-long initial briefing sessions, 'queues' for the teacher's attention can develop and progress is often barely satisfactory in groups where adult input is limited. These arrangements were criticised at the time of the last inspection and have been phased out in most year-groups. It is time now to complete this process, except where there are pressing reasons to the contrary.

25 Staff have secure general teaching skills. There are good relationships between staff and pupils, with high standards of behaviour expected and achieved. Staff set a good example, as when they dress appropriately for physical education lessons, or show their respect for the beliefs of others in religious education lessons. In oral sessions most teachers question, explain and sum up effectively. There are often good arrangements to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are supported and can cope with their work, and these children are generally helped to make good progress. In some classes teachers plan challenging work for their most capable pupils too, but this is not consistent and in some lessons too few demands are made of the average and above average groups. Progress has been made since the last inspection, but this aspect needs a continuing focus. The handful of pupils who are at a relatively early stage in learning English as an additional

language are given well targeted individual support by class teachers; all are achieving well. There is generally good awareness of equal opportunities issues. Gender imbalance is a feature of several classes but most teachers show awareness of the importance of meeting the needs of the whole group. Staff are usually alert to the different approaches sometimes needed by girls and boys, and are quick to challenge stereotyped views. There was an exception in a single instance during the inspection, when girls received disproportionate attention in a gymnastics lesson. As a result, the boys' lack of motivation affected their progress.

26 Some examples were seen of thorough, constructive marking, for example to support writing development in Year 5, and useful targets are set in some mathematics sessions. Other marking is not of the same good standard. Sound use is made of homework to reinforce learning, with regular reading, spelling or mathematics tasks set for all pupils. The homework policy is designed effectively to support subjects through holiday research projects and half-termly tasks for older pupils.

27 Pupils' learning closely reflects the quality of teaching in most lessons, but because of their positive attitudes to school and good behaviour they sometimes learn better than would be anticipated in unexciting lessons. When well taught the pupils progress well and are quick to pick up new information and ideas, as when they are introduced to a new application on the computer. When challenged they can work fast and productively, as when Year 6 took part in a demanding science revision session. Those with special educational needs respond well to the additional help they are given and progress well. The pupils develop a degree of independence as they progress through the school, and by Key Stage 2 individuals, pairs and groups are able to research topics and undertake practical work with a minimum of direct supervision.

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

28 The school has made it a high priority to offer a broad, well-balanced curriculum at both key stages, and is succeeding well. As at the time of the last inspection, it meets statutory requirements for all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Staff are well ahead in their preparations for the implementation of Curriculum 2000 next term. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is appropriately planned on the basis of the areas of learning for children under five, and staff are developing plans to phase in the new Foundation Stage next year. National literacy and numeracy strategies have been fully and effectively implemented throughout the school, and the school is taking good advantage of the opportunities provided by the Dudley Grid for Learning to extend the curriculum and raise standards in ICT. Adequate time is given to each subject, except that the allocation for science is limited in Key Stage 1. The demands of individual subjects do not always have sufficient focus in the minority of classes where the organisation involves different groups of pupils working on different activities at the same time.

29 Wherever possible good links are made between subjects so that skills learned in one area are practised in another, for instance the use of measurement and scale in geography and producing graphs of different types to record observations in science. Writing skills, including note-taking, are developed in many subjects, whilst ICT is used widely, especially for information retrieval.

30 Personal and social education has a secure place on the timetable, and health education is a developing strength. A high quality programme of health education is now in place, which includes sex education and the use and misuse of drugs, as well as sections

on family life and mental health. The school has successfully completed an initial assessment in its bid for recognition as a 'health promoting school'.

31 Policy documents and schemes of work exist for all subjects and have been kept up to date, with national developments taken into account well. Subject co-ordinators review their subjects on the basis of a planned cycle. They regularly monitor and evaluate teachers' lesson plans and the work produced by pupils so that any adjustments needed can be identified.

32 Teachers' plans include good opportunities for identifying cross-curricular themes such as citizenship and environmental issues. Medium and short-term planning is undertaken jointly by teachers within their year-group to ensure consistency between parallel classes. Policies provide a good basis for the steady development of knowledge and skills through the school, so that teachers understand well what work they should be undertaking. Plans are not, however, cross-referenced against National Curriculum levels, which would be helpful in some subjects, especially science. There is some reference to different ability groups in teachers' plans, but, despite the progress made since the last inspection, not all lessons include appropriate extension activities for the more able pupils.

33 The school has a comprehensive policy for special educational needs (SEN) which meets all the requirements of the national Code of Practice. Responsibility for the management of SEN rests with the co-ordinator, but day-to-day implementation is delegated to support staff. They are well experienced and are fully and appropriately involved in lesson planning. The SEN register is efficiently organised. Each teacher has a copy, and the individual education plans (IEPs) for their pupils are available in classrooms. Reviews take place when they should, with parents invited. There is well co-ordinated input from learning and medical support staff from the LEA and effective liaison with secondary schools in the case of pupils in Year 6. Targets identified in IEPs are almost all for reading and writing, reflecting the pupils' most significant needs, and the support given is usually provided in the literacy hour. This extra help is thoroughly effective and the pupils make good progress; three pupils have recently moved to a lower stage on the register or have been removed altogether. Consideration is now being given to the need to include more mathematics targets in pupils' plans. In an effort to ensure that targets are readily understood by parents, some IEPs are currently expressed in terms which are rather too general, and these should now be given a sharper focus.

34 Equality of opportunity is rightly considered a priority by the school. There is a co-ordinator and detailed, up-to-date policy which addresses equality in relation to ability, race, gender, social circumstances and physical disability. The policy is reflected well in the curriculum. Each term there is a specific equal opportunities theme, and staff mark their planning with an agreed symbol to show when they are covering this aspect. Good attention has recently been given to providing more books that will appeal to boys. Equal opportunities practice could usefully be extended to give pupils strategies to use when confronted by inequality, especially to counter stereotyped views, as in one lesson when two boys agreed with the view that 'girls are no good at football'.

35 The curriculum is supported by a broad range of visits, visitors to the school and special events. Pupils have good opportunities to visit local places of interest and to become involved in local arts festivals. Members of the local community contribute their knowledge and expertise; for example the school nurse makes an important contribution to the programme of health education. The school has a policy of learning through the local community and in the neighbourhood, as when the pupils visit the parish church or make a study of the shopping centre in nearby Gornal. Productive links have been developed with a

school in a contrasting area. Occasionally expeditions take the pupils further afield; for example, pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 visited London and the Millennium Dome last term.

36 There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and clubs, especially covering competitive team games and other sporting activities. There is a school choir, and pupils have the opportunity to learn the recorder. Extra music tuition is available for selected pupils, who learn a wide range of orchestral instruments. A popular computer club is available on a rotational basis for pupils in Year 5. With a high rate of take-up, extra-curricular activities are making a strong contribution to the pupils' learning in some subject areas. Some additional activities, including French and dance, are offered by private organisations, but for these a charge is made.

#### Provision for pupils' personal development

37 At the time of the last inspection the school's provision for pupils' personal development was being promoted successfully, and this is still the case. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is sound. Acts of collective worship are generally Christian in nature and make an appropriate contribution to shaping pupils' spiritual development, providing opportunity for celebration and thanksgiving through prayer. Pupils gain secure knowledge and understanding of their own and other people's beliefs in religious education lessons, but opportunities for reflection and moments of spirituality within other subjects of the curriculum are not often planned or exploited. During the inspection there was, however, a moment of deep reflection when older pupils listened to the music of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* and expressed their emotions through poetry. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the care of all living things through their study of the effects of environmental change on habitats in geography. The newly created garden area for quiet reflection is a peaceful and imaginative addition to the environment.

38 The school makes good provision for pupils' moral development. Pupils are taught to know the difference between right and wrong and are expected to behave well, and to respect others. A strong moral dimension is evident in many of the school's policies, notably those for equality of opportunity and for health education. Moral principles also underpin the school's daily routines. The themes for collective worship contribute well to moral development, as in a highly effective assembly which dealt with the theme of personal pride and self-respect. The pupils are proud to have their efforts and good behaviour recognised in a regular 'praise assembly'. An awareness of the needs of others is well developed. Pupils in Year 6 organise charity fund-raising events and they regularly run a stall at the school Summer Fair.

39 As at the time of the last inspection, there is good provision for the development of pupils' social skills and for building a sense of community. Teachers plan for social development as a part of all activities for children under five. In lessons, teachers expect pupils to work amicably in small groups and pairs and to support each other's learning. Older pupils have good opportunities to help with a wide range of tasks which contribute to the smooth running of the school. They care for reception children at playtime and at lunchtime, while pupils in Year 6 act as prefects in a wide variety of situations. Visits out of school, together with the residential visit available to pupils in Year 6, provide good opportunities for pupils to develop positive social attitudes and to get on together in a variety of situations. Sporting activities and team games help to promote social awareness and to develop a competitive spirit. The recently initiated School Council has made a promising start, and is already beginning to bring about change by responding to pupils' constructive suggestions.

40 Provision for cultural development is sound. In art, history, geography, and religious education the pupils learn about different cultures and civilisations from past and present times. The school aims to promote interest in high quality literature written for children and a visit by the author Alan Ahlberg has recently added impetus to this interest. Music is making an increasing contribution to the cultural life of the school. Provision to develop pupils' awareness and prepare them for life in a multicultural society remains satisfactory, as at the time of the last inspection. Pupils study the art of Africa as part of their work on Kenya and teachers are careful to ensure that stereotypical images are not portrayed. They enjoy music from a range of cultures and the school celebrates festivals from major world faiths in assemblies, but they seldom have opportunities outside the classroom to come into contact with cultural and artistic influences other than those of western Europe.

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

41 The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils in its charge is very good and a strength of the school, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well, and display a high level of care and concern for them. There is evidence of good rapport and respect between pupils and staff. Pupils feel safe and happy, and have the confidence and independence to raise any queries and concerns they may have with staff. Under-fives are helped to settle down quickly in the nursery and reception classes. Effective strategies are in place to identify and provide good levels of support to pupils with special educational needs and to discuss targets and review progress achieved with parents on a termly basis.

42 Very effective pupil registration systems are in place that comply fully with statutory requirements. These incorporate well organised whole-school procedures for recording and monitoring attendance. There are clear systems for reporting and managing any incidence of lateness or non-attendance. This contributes to rates of attendance that are well above average.

43 The school's well-established approach to behaviour management helps to promote pupils' self-discipline and self-esteem, contributing greatly to high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. The comprehensive and detailed whole school behaviour policy is discussed and adapted within each classroom at the beginning of the school year, in order to remind pupils of the high standards expected. The school's clearly explained system of rewards and sanctions is understood well by pupils and is applied in a fair and consistent manner by staff. A recently-introduced system of house points is proving to be a success with the pupils. There is no evidence of any bullying or harassment. In the past occasional incidents of verbal bullying have been promptly reported by those concerned; parents and pupils say that such occurrences are dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.

44 Very good child protection procedures are in place, which are understood well and acted upon by staff in the best interests of the pupils. All staff are trained and alert to the need for regularly monitoring the well-being and welfare of the pupils in their care. Staff respond in a discreet and sensitive manner to any personal concerns raised with them.

45 The school takes good care of the pupils' physical and emotional health, with the developing programme of health education making an important contribution. Very good arrangements are in place for administering first aid, for recording minor accidents and for the storage and administration of medicines. The school is well aware of problems connected with the design and location of the designated medical room, and is considering how these issues can be addressed. Very good health and safety procedures have been adopted. During the inspection both staff and pupils demonstrated good health and safety awareness. Emergency evacuation drills are undertaken each term. Appropriate risk

assessments have been undertaken, and regular health and safety inspections are carried out, with all reports and recommendations being considered by governors and acted upon.

46 The pupils are supervised well during breaks and at lunch-time, although the nature of the site makes the supervisors' task challenging. Good standards of catering are achieved in the school with the menu range providing appetising meals and a well balanced diet for the pupils. The premises are very clean and maintained to a good level of cleanliness. The whole school site provides a safe and secure environment for pupils and staff alike.

47 Procedures for the assessment and monitoring of academic performance are good. Children under five are carefully assessed on entry, in consultation with parents. Teachers make effective use of class 'summary files' for regular monitoring, reporting on individual pupil progress and attainment and for use when planning. There is systematic recording of progress in reading and phonics based on the national literacy strategy, and a system of regular checks based on a commercial scheme for mathematics. General assessment criteria have been developed on the basis of schemes of work for other subjects, with regular school-made tests and periodic assessment tasks. A skills check-list formerly used to record progress in ICT now requires updating in line with developments in this subject, and there is also a need to look at how individual skills in design and technology can be best recorded. Sound use is made of assessment information when teachers plan their work overall, with good practice in such subjects as mathematics. There is detailed and regular monitoring of the progress of pupils with special educational needs in the light of their individual targets. Effective procedures are in place for the monitoring and support of pupils' individual and personal development, with good use of formal and informal systems of pupil tracking and, in Key Stage 2, individual target-setting. Subject and assessment co-ordinators work closely with class teachers, and are rationalising existing arrangements for monitoring academic performance and personal development throughout the school. This is starting to have a positive effect on pupils' progress and the standards achieved.

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

48 Good partnership links are in place which provide opportunities for the full involvement of parents in all aspects of their children's education and personal development. This is a particular strength in the nursery. Parents throughout the school are very supportive, hold the staff in high regard and believe their children receive a good standard of education.

49 The school welcomes and actively encourages parents to become fully involved in their children's learning. Staff appreciate the contribution of a good number of regular voluntary helpers who provide valuable extra help for the pupils. These volunteers, who include a number of grandparents, are well briefed and effectively used by the teachers to support the pupils' learning in the classroom, during swimming sessions and on out-of-school educational visits.

50 Very good procedures are in place for communication with parents whose children have been identified as having special educational needs. These ensure parental involvement and close working relationships with the teachers in the review of pupils' targets and achievements. They have a positive impact on the parents' understanding of their child's needs and the potential for improvement in the future.

51 Overall the quality of information provided to parents is good, including written reports on school activities, regular newsletters, organised parents' meetings and invitations to visit the school. In particular, the so-named 'daisy chain' meetings and visits are highly

valued. These are a series of well-structured occasions which provide new parents and children with a very good introduction to the educational objectives and daily routines of the nursery and reception classes. A first-rate parents' handbook is produced by the school. This serves as a valuable reference document for parents, covering all aspects of their child's time in school.

52 An effective home-school agreement is in place, which provides for the regular and good quality exchange of information between teachers and parents. The school has a positive approach to consulting parents by way of meetings and questionnaires. Many praise the willingness and responsive nature of teachers to any concerns and queries raised with them. Termly parent and teacher consultation meetings to discuss pupils' progress and achievements are effectively organised. The end-of-year pupil progress reports to parents meet statutory requirements, but some lack sufficient detail about the child's achievements. Many fail to identify particular areas for improvement and future learning targets.

53 The ongoing development of the school's partnership arrangements with parents has been sustained since the last inspection, and is helping to maintain the good standing of the school within the local community.

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

54 The school faced some significant challenges after the last inspection, with the long-term absence of key members of staff and an acting headteacher for twelve months. Senior staff pulled well together, however, and it is to their credit that between them the school was competently managed without need for a 'caretaker' leader from outside. Although the school continued to run smoothly, some impetus was unavoidably lost at this time. With the appointment of a new headteacher just over two years ago and a full complement of senior staff, the position is now far more secure and the school is moving forward purposefully following a period of re-adjustment. Most outstanding issues from the last inspection have now been tackled effectively, and there has been a concerted effort to raise expectations and to lift standards to the above-average levels of which the pupils are capable. This hard work is beginning to produce results. Taking the whole four-year period since the last inspection into account, school improvement has been just satisfactory, but the pace of change is accelerating and there have been significant improvements in the last year. In particular, effective systems are now in place to monitor classroom teaching, with good arrangements for feedback to sharpen professional skills. Steps have been taken to analyse and improve academic standards, with the introduction of setting for mathematics, booster classes and individual target setting for the older pupils. The school is in a secure position to capitalise on the progress already made and to improve further.

55 The headteacher has a clear vision of the high standards and quality of provision that could be achieved, and provides strong and effective leadership towards these goals. Change has been introduced purposefully by negotiation and mutual agreement, whilst a few difficult issues have been tackled directly. The school's well-established strengths, which include a commitment to equality of opportunity and good, supportive relationships between staff, have been effectively sustained and built upon. The deputy headteacher works closely and successfully with the head in shaping the direction of the school. Together they have an analytical and constructive approach, showing good understanding of where the school is heading and what needs to be done next.

56 The senior management team and the subject co-ordinators make a significant and positive contribution to the effective management of the school. The deputy headteacher manages many of the essential daily school routines and the provision for pupils with special educational needs very capably. The senior management team is an experienced group

which supports the headteacher effectively in the running of the school. They develop the curriculum and organise the key stage departments, using their experience and initiative to implement policy and to consolidate school improvement. The management of curriculum subjects has improved since the last inspection. A three-year development cycle is now in place for each subject, which gives co-ordinators opportunities to review standards of pupils' work and monitor the quality of teaching and planning. This is beginning to have a favourable impact and is helping to raise standards, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and ICT.

57 The governing body is led well and organised effectively, ensuring that the school meets all statutory requirements in full. Governors hold full meetings at least once a term, with good attendance. Minutes show that much time in full governing body meetings is unavoidably taken up by routine business and the discussion of national and local initiatives, but members of such groups as the finance committee and the pastoral committee (whose brief includes the curriculum) are fully engaged in significant decisions and developing issues. Governors are not involved closely or at an early stage in reviewing the school's performance and establishing priorities for development, but they are kept well informed by the headteacher. Efforts are now being made to give governors the opportunity of working with staff when the next school development plan is drafted. This is a positive development, which will improve opportunities for them to initiate change and will give them a greater stake in the plan.

58 The most recent school development plan is produced to a sound standard format and includes all essential elements, including analysis of trends, a budgetary overview and forecast. Recent priorities have inevitably been driven by national and local agendas, with implementation of national literacy and numeracy strategies and the Dudley Grid for Learning tending to dominate. The school has, however, worked in addition on worthwhile and successful whole-school projects such as a health education initiative. There are good arrangements to ensure that steady ongoing development in each subject of the curriculum is maintained.

59 The school's educational priorities are very effectively supported by financial planning. However, the current move to separate the processes of budget setting and development planning could weaken the important connection between identifying priorities and allocating funds, and the rationale for this step should be considered again by governors. In all other respects financial planning, monitoring and control are highly effective, and there is prudent management of the resources available to the school. The finance committee has a key role in financial planning, monitoring the budget, receiving tenders and allocating contracts. Funding and other resources allocated for specific initiatives and for special educational needs are properly used for the intended purposes. Staff and governors alike do their best to obtain good value in their spending. The results can be seen in significant improvements to the school building and grounds, and in the effective model adopted for recent whole-school training in ICT. Accounts are meticulously managed and day to day procedures are highly efficient as a result of the sterling work of the school's administrative staff. Highly effective use is made of new technologies to support the day to day running of the school, as well as in the classroom.

60 Compared with many other primary schools, the proportion of the budget spent on teaching staff is below average, but the school nevertheless has an adequate number of qualified and experienced teachers. The pupil to teacher ratio is similar to the national average, although class sizes are occasionally over 30 in Key Stage 2, where there is also a lack of classroom support. There are plans to address this issue in the coming school year. The level of support is satisfactory in Key Stage 1, particularly for pupils on the special needs register, and staffing levels are also broadly satisfactory for the under-fives.

61 Co-ordinators are identified for each subject area, as well as for special educational needs and assessment. There have been many changes in subject leadership recently, but the match of teachers' qualifications and expertise to their current responsibilities has been carefully thought through and the new arrangements are bedding in well. A well planned and high relevant programme of in-service training is recorded and reported regularly to the governing body. Funding has been used particularly effectively to develop teachers' understanding and practical competence in ICT, and this has a direct bearing on the standards now being achieved. Professional development is linked closely to the priorities of the school development plan. Recently there has been an appropriate focus on raising awareness and expertise as national literacy and numeracy strategies have been introduced. Professional development reviews are held at least annually for all members of staff, including nursery nurses, clerical staff and lunchtime supervisors, whilst the school has maintained its well thought through appraisal cycle for teachers. Staffing responsibilities are amended appropriately and job descriptions are negotiated. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school are good. The school provides training placements for both teachers and nursery nurses, and has well organised systems for supporting such students. There is a helpful and well-written staff handbook, particularly effectively designed to assist newly appointed and temporary staff.

62 Both the indoor accommodation and outdoor facilities are very good, making the school a comfortable and pleasant workplace for staff and pupils. The building is maintained to a high standard by the site manger and his staff who take a pride in their work. Displays around the school are both attractive and informative. The accommodation has been imaginatively developed in recent years, with hazards such as steeply sloping outdoor play areas addressed by redesign. A security fence contributes to the low level of vandalism and graffiti. Other improvements since the last inspection include a large music area, conference suite and panelling in the hall to improve the acoustic. The building is very well used by the community during and after the normal school day. Mother and toddler groups, before and after school clubs, youth organisations, as well as school extra-curricular activities ensure that the accommodation is used effectively. The outdoor facilities are well laid out, and there are adequate hard areas marked for team games as well as individual creative play. There is an enclosed play area for the under-fives.

63 Resources for learning are good overall, and the teachers and pupils have all that they need for most lessons. There has recently been a significant improvement in the provision for ICT, with new hardware and software provided through the Dudley Grid for Learning. Additional funds have been allocated to implement the National Numeracy Strategy, and a new mathematics scheme has been introduced. The library is well developed, with a good policy to develop pupils' research and study skills. Resources are supplemented well by the LEA's loan service. An issue raised by a recent audit has been addressed appropriately, with an up-to-date stock inventory now in place.

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

64 This is a school which is already developing well. In order to consolidate improvements and to continue to raise standards the headteacher, staff and governors should:

**1. Address in full the key issue of the 1996 report on 'rotational' teaching, phasing out the remaining occasions when pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 work on different subjects at the same time, except when this is strictly necessary.**

(See paragraphs 24, 28, 108, 122).

**2. Take steps to raise standards of speaking and listening throughout the school by**

- a greater focus on talking throughout the school, including the nursery;
- more explicit attention to subject-specific terminology, especially in mathematics;
- providing more opportunities for pupils in the junior age-group to speak formally before an audience.

(See paragraphs 3, 4, 6, 19, 84 - 85).

**3. Improve literacy development in Key Stage 1 by**

- ensuring a close match between the difficulty of pupils' reading books and their stage of development;
- reviewing the use of *Breakthrough to Literacy* to ensure that pupils develop confidence and fluency in their writing.

(See paragraphs 2, 4, 7, 84, 86, 88).

**4. Ensure that lessons are more consistently challenging, in order to develop the potential of all pupils by**

- giving greater attention to the pace of pupils' learning;
- building further on the high quality of the best teaching in the school;
- continuing to raise expectations of what can be achieved with above average pupils, in line with the good practice of some staff.

(See paragraphs 20 – 25, 92, 101, 108 – 110, 135, 141).

In addition the following lesser issue should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

**Develop, or reintroduce, systems for charting the development of individual skills, especially for pupils under five and in the subject areas of ICT and design and technology.**

(See paragraphs 124, 142).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	102
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13	49	33	5	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)	30	423
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	n/a	

Special educational needs		
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	70

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	31

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	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
		1999	24	39

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	21	20
	Girls	36	38	37
	Total	55	59	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (83)	94 (94)	90 (86)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	18	20
	Girls	34	33	32
	Total	50	51	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (83)	81 (92)	83 (91)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	32	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	28	26	27
	Girls	16	15	15
	Total	39	41	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (64)	85 (56)	88 (72)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	28	28
	Girls	16	16	14
	Total	41	44	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (60)	92 (64)	88 (74)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	20
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	390
Any other minority ethnic group	10

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.5
Average class size	30.2

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

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	164

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33

Number of pupils per FTE adult	15
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

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

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	749,576
Total expenditure	738,699
Expenditure per pupil	1,695
Balance brought forward from previous year	21,178
Balance carried forward to next year	32,055

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	453
Number of questionnaires returned	112

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	37	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	4	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	55	2	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	39	13	4	9
The teaching is good.	45	46	5	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	42	18	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	41	4	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	38	2	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	33	46	13	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	40	48	4	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	54	6	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	38	8	4	14

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

65 Children under five are taught in the nursery and in two reception classes. They are admitted to the nursery on a part-time basis as soon as possible after their third birthday and join the reception classes in the September or January prior to their fifth birthday. At the time of the inspection all children in the nursery and 33 of the children in the reception classes, were under the age of five.

66 The school has maintained the good quality of provision for the under-fives that was observed at the time of the last inspection. Children enter the nursery with skills that are rather better than those of most three-year-olds in some important respects, including their willingness to fit in with routines and their readiness for learning. They make satisfactory progress through the nursery and reception classes, with good achievement in the more formal skills of literacy and numeracy. 'Baseline' assessment indicates that attainment is slightly above the LEA average and above national averages on entry to reception, especially in the more formal skills of literacy and numeracy. Inspection findings suggest that by the age of five the children are above average in their personal and social development, listening skills, literacy and mathematics. Other skills, including speaking and knowledge and understanding of the world about them, are average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the early years with support designed well to meet identified needs.

67 The nursery is a calm and stimulating learning environment where the children feel happy, confident, and secure. The curriculum for children under five is planned well and provides a broad and balanced programme of learning experiences, matched to the needs of children under five. The mix of teacher-directed and child-chosen activities is generally effective and tasks are well matched to the planned objectives for each session. Provision in the nursery is designed specifically to meet the needs of three and four-year-olds and is of high quality, but there is sometimes an over-emphasis on teacher-directed activities resulting in a lack of independence on the part of the children. The accommodation is skilfully organised and provides a very attractive learning environment. Teachers and support staff in both the nursery and reception classes work very effectively as a team, promoting good standards, especially in the formal skills of literacy and numeracy. Children in the reception classes learn through appropriate teacher-directed activities, but there is not always sufficient provision for access to structured play activities in order that children may make choices for themselves and develop independence in their learning. The timetable and curriculum arrangements within the reception classes sometimes result in children missing important aspects of the literacy or numeracy sessions because of withdrawal for other learning opportunities. Teachers work hard to compensate for this, but this is not always satisfactory.

68 Links with parents and carers are good and their contribution to their children's learning in the nursery is invaluable. There are home visits prior to admission to the nursery, where parents are involved in assessment of their children, and personal invitations to parents and children to visit. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children into the nursery on arrival where they help them to settle down, Reading or library books are shared daily in the reception class and parents have a significant input into their children's learning. Parents are appreciative of this close involvement. Observations of children's learning are recorded from the start. Children's progress continues to be tracked in the reception class, where additional records are kept of their attainment in reading. These records do not include a diagnostic assessment of children's developing skills, however, and do little to help teachers

to focus on identified needs.

### **Personal and social development**

69 Children enter the nursery with social skills that are broadly similar to those of other children of their age. While they have limited social independence, most are highly co-operative and well prepared for learning. The nursery staff place great emphasis on this area of development and the children make good progress, developing self-confidence as they learn to understand and comply with the routines of the school. By the time they are five years old children's attainment is above what is normally expected for their age. Parents are particularly pleased with their children's development. Children respond positively to their experiences at school, forming amicable relationships with their peers and attending well to their teachers. The 'family' groups in the nursery form a strong basis for the school's training in social and moral values and responsibilities. These groups create a sense of belonging and enable staff to develop close bonds with the children in their care. Children are encouraged, at specified times, to choose activities for themselves, select their own materials in artwork, to take turns and share toys and equipment. They co-operate well in pairs, for example in physical activities as they practise skills of throwing and catching beanbags and balls. At the end of a session they tidy up the toys, sweep up the sand, and put tools and books back into place with a minimum of fuss and prompting.

70 In reception children learn to dress and undress for physical education sessions and to fold their own clothes carefully. Attainment in personal and social development is above that of many five-year-olds in other schools. At lunchtime children who bring sandwiches to school or have school meals sit quietly and responsibly, and behave very politely, asking for help when needed and showing independence whenever possible with help from pupils from Year 6.

71 Teaching of personal and social skills is good, with a consistent approach that enables children to understand the behaviour that is expected in school. All staff act as excellent rôle models and children under five learn very well from the example before them.

### **Language and literacy**

72 Attainment in language and literacy overall is well in line with national targets for five-year-olds, with strengths in literacy. The children's use of spoken English is only average, however, and not as well-developed as their early reading and writing skills. Children in the nursery listen to stories attentively and they enjoy songs and rhymes. A few children model and repeat the teacher's language during story sessions. Children's language skills are developed through rôle-play, stories and rhymes, and in the course of play activities and creative work with adults. Children in reception listen independently to taped stories, where they are able to familiarise themselves with new speech patterns in their own time.

73 Children have access to a range of good quality books in the reading areas and they are encouraged to sit quietly and enjoy and 'read' a story for themselves from a familiar book. Children handle books appropriately and with confidence and by the time they are five years old almost all are beginning to pick out separate words in the text. Many children recognise letters of the alphabet by sound and shape, and higher attaining children relate these sounds systematically to words. A few are beginning to read simple texts fluently and independently. Children take books home to share with their parents and this involvement has a noticeable impact on attainment. Writing is incorporated into rôle-play from an early age. Most children write their own name without support, for example on their artwork. They have a good understanding of initial letters, and higher attainers write well-structured short sentences with an appropriate use of capital letters and full stops. Letter formation is good,

with most letters correctly formed and fairly even.

74 The teaching of language and literacy for children under five has strengths, particularly in the literacy hour in the reception classes, where some children attain very high standards for their age. However, there are also some shortcomings. Nursery staff work hard to encourage interaction in group discussion but the size of the groups does not encourage individual contributions and does not allow staff to extend children's spoken language at an individual level. The teaching of literacy skills in reception is very effective, and teachers try to involve children in whole-class discussion. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for children to work in small groups with an adult to develop their oral language skills fully, for example in mathematics. There is insufficient emphasis on the development of free expression and interaction through rôle-play and drama to allow the children to develop creativity and appreciation of the imaginative use of language.

### **Mathematics**

75 Towards the end of the reception year, children attain levels in mathematics which are above those of most five-year-olds. Skills and understanding are developed through sorting and matching activities in the nursery as a part of sand and water play, activities using shape, position, size, and quantity, and through songs and rhymes. Nursery children were observed, for example, ordering four apples according to size, and matching pairs from an assortment of colourful socks. Children practise sequencing and pattern-making in painting activities in the nursery, and enjoy counting forwards and backwards using songs and rhymes to support learning. They use beads to compile block graphs and with teacher support create block graphs of favourite breakfast foods.

76 Children in the reception classes sequence patterns of two and three colours and shapes and explain their reasoning, showing secure understanding. All children in the reception classes make good progress in extending their understanding of numbers through daily use and practice and quickly learn numbers to 20. Many of the older reception children can already add and subtract mentally within ten and are developing an appropriate understanding of mathematical language when they talk about number. They 'count on' confidently, and understand and use the concept of doubling. These children have good levels of understanding of number, and they partition objects confidently both practically and mentally to find, for example, different ways in which model animals can be divided between three fields without affecting the total. Children make good progress in mathematical skills and several children are working at very high levels for their age.

77 The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and provide work that challenges the most able pupils very effectively. Teachers provide an appropriate range of activities for children to practise and consolidate their learning in the nursery and children in reception develop this understanding to incorporate the use of numerals and the recording of computation.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

78 Children's knowledge and understanding of the world are developing appropriately and they attain levels that are similar to those of most children of their age. Opportunities are provided in nursery and reception classes for children to develop technological skills through their use of construction toys during play activities with large and small apparatus. In cookery activities, nursery children observe changes with fascination as they rub margarine into flour for their cakes. They enjoy smelling and tasting the assortment of exciting fruits in their fresh fruit salad as they peel, slice and chop. Children in nursery are planting an assortment of seeds in their topic on growth, and are surprised when they do not

appear instantly. Reception children learn about the locality as they go to post letters addressed to themselves. They anxiously repeat their address lest they forget before it is safely recorded on the envelope. As they become more familiar with computers children under five are developing early skills with the mouse and they all draw and match pictures competently. Children make sound progress in this area of learning with good teaching. Teachers provide the children with imaginative tasks and give them a range of learning experiences to develop their understanding of the world.

### **Physical development**

79 The physical development of children under five is similar to that of most other children in this age-group, and they are course to reach national targets by the time they are five. Nursery children make good use of the secure play space to develop their motor skills and to use space safely. They show good control and co-ordination when propelling wheeled vehicles and use good avoidance techniques to prevent collisions as they travel around the playground. Children in reception can throw beanbags and balls with fair accuracy but few can yet catch effectively.

80 Most children make steady progress when using paintbrushes, pencils, and crayons, completing jigsaw puzzles, building with constructional toys and pouring water into containers of different shape and size. They use the cursors on computers with the control needed to operate programs. Children in the nursery make spoon puppets and reception children use safety needles to sew fabric collage puppets with gigantic tacking stitches of which they are extremely proud. Opportunities are provided for children to develop technological skills through their use of construction toys during play activities with both large and small apparatus. Children make sound progress in this area of learning with effective teaching and a clear focus for learning through topic work.

### **Creative Development**

81 Children's creative and artistic skills are developing appropriately for their age and are evident in the bright displays of work and in the confidence with which the children select materials. They engage in collage enthusiastically, and enjoy creating their own individual effects with a range of textures, tones and shades. Children use paints, crayons, and pencils to good effect, creating their own self-portraits, and their free painting displays an abundance of brilliant colour and enjoyment. Dough is used regularly in the nursery and children enjoy squeezing, rolling, shaping, cutting and forming their own models. Children attain levels in most areas of creative work that are typical for their age. Their musical expertise is developing appropriately. Children sing together, recite rhymes, and use appropriate actions to the words and music. Nursery children experiment with percussion instruments and thoroughly enjoy making their own music. Children in reception learn to recognise fast and slow sections in a recording of Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals*. Teaching is sound with secure subject knowledge of the creative arts although work is sometimes over-directed by staff, with more emphasis on the finished product than on children's experience and enjoyment of the creative process.

## Teaching and learning

82 The quality of teaching for children under five is good overall, with some very good teaching. The teaching of personal and social development is a strength, and is incorporated into activities planned for all areas of learning. Children's positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour are directly attributable to the teaching and support they receive. Good care is taken to ensure that children with special educational needs feel confident and happy. Good teaching in literacy and mathematics underpins activities that develop children's skills, but more opportunities are needed to develop confident speaking. Teachers provide a variety of interesting experiences and have high expectations that children will behave sensibly. Well-qualified nursery nurses provide good support for the work of teachers and their significant professional contribution has a positive impact on children's learning.

## ENGLISH

83 During the four years since 1996 there has been a trend of steady improvement in pupils' performance in national tests, but this has been from a relatively low starting point. In 1999 the results achieved by eleven-year olds were broadly in line with the national average. A good number of pupils reached the expected standard (level 4) but below average numbers reached a higher level (level 5). The school's results were not as good as those of comparable schools. Over a four-year period girls have performed distinctly better than boys, to a more marked degree than is seen generally. There are indications of a continued steady improvement this year compared with last, but standards by eleven are still only slightly better than the national average.

84 National assessments at seven have also shown improvement in recent years, especially in reading. Results were better than the national average in both reading and writing last year, but reading standards were not as high as those found in similar schools. Teacher assessments in 1999 showed standards of speaking and listening that were below the national average. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls at seven is similar to other schools, when taken over a number of years. The position now is that overall standards in English are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1. Attainment in reading and writing remains above average at seven, but speaking is only just average for the age-group. Overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is not as high as it might be taking into account the high standards of literacy being achieved by a good proportion of children in the reception age-group.

85 The skills of speaking and listening, while satisfactory overall, are not at present fully developed through the whole range of activities set out in the English policy. Where there are planned activities for giving opinions and using speech, attainment is raised. This took place, for example, when some able Year 4 pupils stood at the front and spoke to the class about an issue in a story. In lessons some pupils can answer or comment in a way that shows they have been listening carefully. Others choose to nod or reply with brief phrases, speak inaudibly or remain silent. In the role-play comers in Key Stage 1, pupils tend to opt for sedentary or writing activities rather than using the telephone for conversation. In a Year 2 'news' session, many pupils spoke in a hesitant manner, needing tactful prompting by the teacher before incidents were described clearly and in full. In Key Stage 2 the pupils have secure conversational skills, but some find it difficult to articulate ideas about the books they are reading or other aspects of their work in school. There were few occasions during the inspection when pupils made a formal presentation to others. All pupils develop the vocabulary they need to talk about language and learn about words, sentence structure, tenses, narratives and descriptions.

86 Pupils' attainment in reading is rather above national averages by the end of Year 2, but some of these pupils are not fulfilling the potential they show in the reception year. The teaching of phonics is very effective at the start of the key stage. A large group of five-year olds in the reception class are already beginning to build up words with regular spelling patterns, listening carefully for the vowel in the middle of the word. Throughout the key stage pupils confidently attempt words which are new to them in their reading books. By Year 1 a few above average pupils can already read fluently, and these individuals make good progress. However, the achievements of average and below average pupils are less consistent. Staff in Key Stage 1 have a good understanding of how children learn to read and successfully promote an interest in books, but are not systematic enough in ensuring that the pupils' reading books are at the right level of difficulty. Especially when a text is too difficult, pupils' fluency and confidence are affected, and this in turn affects achievement. The same point was made at the time of the last inspection. Staff have recognised a need here and re-stocking of class libraries with a wider selection of easily readable texts is a priority. Good progress is made when teachers work with the pupils from big books, as in a Year 1 lesson when the children competently found answers to questions in a non-fiction text. Each group has a weekly guided reading session, when the teacher develops and records their progress using a book graded to their ability. These sessions are also promoting progress in reading effectively. By the time they leave Year 2, pupils understand the layout of books and some can name their favourite authors. They enjoy browsing in the library but some do not persevere independently in reading a selected book. The majority do read with expression and understanding and find information by using dictionaries and ICT based materials. They have a secure grasp of phonics, which enables them to attempt unfamiliar words confidently. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in their reading.

87 Pupils in Key Stage 2 read literature from an increasing range of genres. Their understanding of words and meaning develops through text-based work in literacy lessons and through reading at home. Understanding of subject-specific vocabulary in lessons other than English is less well developed. For example high attaining pupils in a Year 3 science lesson could read, but did not understand the term 'conifer', whilst lower attainers could not read 'damaged' and struggled to read essential basic vocabulary such as 'length' and 'width'. Earlier work is built on, however, and there is steady progress, accelerating at the end of the key stage. Most pupils in Year 6 have the secure reading and comprehension skills they need for their secondary education. Attainment is well in line with national standards and is clearly improving, but it has not yet reached its potential level.

88 Pupils write for different readers, and the skills of writing, including spelling and handwriting, are systematically developed. Pupils in Year 1 were observed as they practised the use of capital letters and full stops, and in another Year 1 class they demonstrated a secure understanding of vowels, consonants and phonemes. However, in a 'Breakthrough' session a more able group of pupils struggled, even with a great deal of adult input, to produce written work of a barely average standard. The way in which *Breakthrough to Literacy* materials are used needs reconsideration. As matters stand, many Year 1 pupils write more fluently and imaginatively in what are termed 'emergent writing' lessons than in other sessions.

89 Pupils in Year 2 undertake the full range of literacy tasks. They learn to plan and review their work, identifying key ideas. They describe events like the school play, retell a story, write poems and letters and write a weather forecast. They have more limited experience of individual, imaginative writing, however. By the end of the key stage, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have made satisfactory progress. Their work has good features, such as their improving handwriting and some pupils' 'topic' writing which clearly motivated them and results in work of a high standard. Pupils for whom

English is an additional language write fluently, but need occasional help when they use non-standard grammatical forms.

90 In Key Stage 2 much of the pupils' writing is linked to good quality texts, including poetry, and so complements their reading development. They respond imaginatively to Vivaldi's music, the visit of Alan Ahlberg and a visit to the Millennium Dome. There is not always enough to awaken lively and creative ideas and bring about enjoyment of writing within the format of the literacy hour, but staff are making efforts to address this issue by giving extra time to extended writing. In each year-group most of the pupils' work falls well within average national standards. The pupils write fluently and at a good length, many of them organising their ideas effectively into paragraphs by Year 6. In a Year 5 lesson the narrative writing of some pupils showed a good feel for story-telling, with insight into the motivation and feelings of their characters. Average and above average pupils enjoyed listening to one another's stories read aloud and had some appropriate ideas about how to improve their writing when they redrafted it. Lower attainers, however, found it difficult to sustain the authorial 'voice', and there were fluctuations in tense and mood. By the end of the key stage most pupils present their work neatly, spell reasonably accurately and punctuate correctly. The progress of all pupil groups is not entirely consistent until Year 6. Whereas in some lessons work is not always demanding enough for higher attainers, there is a good level of challenge for the oldest pupils and their progress is invariably good, reflected in their improved attainment.

91 Pupils' attitudes in English lessons are usually good and behaviour is sometimes very good. They listen courteously to one another in pairs and groups, are careful with books and resources and help to maintain a good standard of tidiness and order in their classrooms. The level of responsibility taken for their own standard of work varies, and the response of pupils to teachers' questions could be more forthcoming and enthusiastic in some cases.

92 The teaching of English is sound in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2 and overall. During the inspection there was an example of very good teaching in each key stage, with all other teaching satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory or good, in equal proportion, in Key Stage 2. Teachers have good subject expertise, work hard and are well-prepared for their lessons. Planning is thorough and consistent. However, some phrases are used loosely: for example the word 'discussion' sometimes means the teacher asking questions, rather than pupils taking turns and structuring a viewpoint. Marking of pupils' work is positive, broadly following school policy, but occasionally accepting without comment some untidy or poorer work than usual. Ways to improve are not always given and criteria by which the work is judged are not always clear in pupils' books. In the best lessons teachers present clear objectives then employ a skilful blend of encouragement and challenge to enable pupils to achieve them.

93 The school has adopted the National Literacy Strategy in full. Its implementation has been well managed and has brought about improvement in curriculum range, planning and resources, with a positive influence on attainment and rising standards. Work in English is underpinned by comprehensive policy documents and by the drive and commitment of the two co-ordinators, whose enthusiasm for books and literacy is very evident. They have understood the need to review and develop in the light of the National Literacy Strategy and are justifiably proud of what has been achieved to date through the hard work and team spirit of all the staff, including support staff.

94 Resources for English are generally satisfactory, and the quality and quantity of books provided recently for shared and guided reading is good. There remains a need for a wider range of very simple texts for use early in Key Stage 1 and for structured reading

books for lower attaining pupils at both key stages. Good use is made of borrowing facilities offered by the local authority. These include author boxes, fiction and non-fiction. Planning and development of the library has been the responsibility of two members of staff who share the coordinators' enthusiasm for books. The library stock is not large but is very well kept and displayed. At present these facilities are used more in Key Stage 1, and young pupils were observed as they enjoyed browsing and reading. Older pupils are library monitors, on duty at lunchtime. One of them was able to explain the classification system, but only at a very basic level.

## **MATHEMATICS**

95 The 1999 National Curriculum tests showed that standards attained in mathematics by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 were well above the national average, with a high proportion reaching the expected level (level 4). Almost one third of the pupils reached a higher level (level 5). Compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, pupils' performance at eleven was as would be expected. Inspection evidence from lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that similar standards are being achieved this year. National Curriculum test results from Key Stage 1 in 1999 showed that pupils were attaining standards in line with the national average, but below the standards being achieved in similar schools. However, inspection evidence obtained from the present Year 2 classes indicates that standards are rising, and the present group of seven-year olds are reaching levels above the national average.

96 Throughout the school, levels of attainment are generally improving. National Curriculum tests over the last four years, although variable, show an upward trend in overall standards. A number of factors are having a favourable impact on pupils' performance in mathematics. These include the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, which gives teachers specific guidance on planning suitable programmes of work, the setting or grouping by ability levels in Key Stage 2 and good leadership by the co-ordinator.

97 Pupils' progress throughout the school is satisfactory overall. They acquire appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding ensuring that high standards of attainment are maintained. However, pupils' progress is particularly good towards the end of Key Stage 2. The quality of teaching in Year 6 is of a consistently high calibre and this enhances pupils' learning significantly. Pupils with special educational needs in mathematics make good progress. Their individual educational plans include realistic targets which enable teachers to provide work well matched to their needs.

98 In Year 6, a large group of higher attaining pupils have developed good skills in calculation. They use these in problem-solving exercises to multiply and divide three and four digit numbers successfully. Pupils in the upper set have a good understanding of mean, mode and median averages, and can evaluate the usefulness of their results to a commercial enterprise. Pupils are proficient in the use of a calculator. They check their answers to confirm the results of their calculation to find the mean of a set of numbers. Pupils of average ability at the end of Key Stage 2 reach standards well in line with the nationally expected levels. Multiplication tables are known thoroughly and used accurately to solve mathematical problems. They have a sound understanding of the processes involved in the addition and subtraction of fractions which include mixed numbers. They know that the term 'mean' is equivalent to the average, and they solve examples by methodical calculation using addition and division skills. Lower attaining pupils in Year 6 reach standards that are only just below average. They interpret graphs competently, understanding the range of temperature readings and identify reasons for sudden changes in trends. Mental addition skills are being developed, to the extent that 'adding on' systems are applied to count on successfully from 36 to 100.

99 Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 are becoming skilful in the use of their 2s, 3s, 5s and 10 times table. They recognise these patterns in a number square. The concept of place value of tens and units is well established. This is exemplified in their use of a modified number grid: pupils know that to add ten requires a vertical step of one grid but to add a unit a horizontal movement to the right is required. High attainers in this group are beginning to build on existing knowledge and develop an understanding of the place value of hundreds. Pupils of average attainment in Key Stage 1 are reaching standards slightly above national average levels. They add three single digit numbers competently to make 20, complete simple calculations involving the subtraction of tens and units and give change from 20p in simulated shopping exercises. In shape and space work they recognise lines of symmetry in squares and triangles. With teacher support, lower attaining pupils add together numbers thrown on a die. Using a number grid they recognise the pattern of adding ten by moving vertically down the squares of the grid. Pupils in this ability range recognise odd and even number but do not have secure understanding or recall of mathematical facts beyond single digits.

100 Pupils generally have positive attitudes in mathematics lessons. They tackle tasks enthusiastically and present their work neatly. There are constructive relationships, with many good examples of pupils working well together to solve problems. Behaviour in lessons is good and often very good. Pupils' concentration levels are good. They listen carefully to teachers and absorb information. Occasionally, concentration wanes when teachers' introductions are too long. In some lessons, especially those early in the day, pupils are slow to respond to questions and teachers have to be persistent and probing in order to obtain answers.

101 The quality of teaching and learning is sound overall in both key stages but consistently good teaching is evident in Years 6 and 3; this enhances pupils' learning. Teachers' planning is good. Learning objectives are clearly identified and shared with pupils, enabling them to have a clear understanding about what is to be learnt in the lesson. Setting by attainment level in Key Stage 2 also has a favourable impact on pupils' learning because tasks are well-matched and relevant to their experiences and levels of understanding. Pupils are managed well by their teachers. Encouragement and praise are used effectively to spur pupils to achieve higher levels in their work. Pupils' work is assessed thoroughly. Teachers circulate amongst pupils whilst tasks are undertaken and give useful advice on the ways in which work can be improved. The marking of work is regular. Some teachers employ good systems to target improvement, such as written comments and pupils' self-evaluation of work using the headings of work-rate, accuracy and presentation; this is not a consistent practice throughout the school, though. Teachers' knowledge is sound and well supported by the National Numeracy Strategy guidelines and the commercial scheme followed by the school. However, the use of the correct mathematical vocabulary is neglected in some lessons and this limits pupils' learning. Resources are used effectively to aid pupils' learning especially in Key Stage 1, where teachers use apparatus skilfully to support the building of concepts and develop skills in calculation. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally appropriate; in Year 6 they are high and pupils are set challenging tasks. However, in less successful lessons pupils are not significantly challenged by the work set and do not fulfil their mathematical potential. The sometimes affects the progress made by high attaining pupils. The pace of some lessons is only moderate and insufficient time is given for pupils to practise their skills and consolidate their learning.

102 The school provides pupils with a good, balanced and broad mathematical curriculum. All four strands of mathematics are well-represented within the school curriculum. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has aided the development of mathematics in the school through an improved teaching approach and the

implementation of a more precise, progressive graded curriculum. Effective strategies are in place for teaching and applying numeracy in various curriculum areas, especially science and geography. ICT is incorporated successfully into the curriculum with good examples of data-handling, as in a Year 5 lesson when graphs were generated to represent findings on averages.

103 There are good systems for pupil assessment. By keeping up-to-date records teachers have a clear understanding of individuals' attainment levels and rates of progress. Periodic exercises in lessons on previously completed work help teachers to evaluate pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in mathematics. The introduction of target-setting is beginning to have a beneficial impact on pupils' progress.

104 The subject is well-managed and led by the co-ordinator. Standards of pupil attainment are rising through careful monitoring of teaching and learning and using the information gained to target future development. Recent training for the co-ordinator and the staff has raised teacher expertise and the profile of the subject in school. Learning resources are accessible and of a good quality. They are used effectively throughout the school to promote pupils' learning. Displays in classrooms act as a stimulus to pupils and a learning tool when pupils are involved in problem solving.

105 The school would appear to have maintained standards of attainment in mathematics since the last inspection. In reality, statistical information shows an improvement in the results of National Curriculum test results over the last four years. The monitoring of standards has improved and the discontinuation of 'rotational' grouping arrangements for mathematics has helped to enhance the quality of learning.

## **SCIENCE**

106 Standards in science are now broadly average at the age of seven, and better than average by eleven. In 1999, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was assessed by teachers as below the national average, although the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level (level 3) matched national figures. Teacher assessments for 2000 are likely to show improvement to at least the national average. In 1999 Key Stage 2 test results were above the national average, but below the standard reached in similar schools. This was a marked improvement on the previous two years. Results this year are expected to be similar to 1999, showing that improved standards have been sustained. Evidence from lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection would support this view.

107 Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is similar to that of other five-year olds when they embark on the Key Stage 1 programme of study. From this average starting point, they make steady progress with satisfactory achievements in Key Stage 1. In Year 1 the pupils learn to identify and sort basic materials and find simple ways of classifying them. By Year 2 the pupils are developing a secure understanding of investigation, as when they use simple equipment to test the relationship between different slopes and the distance travelled by a wheeled toy. Progress is good through Key Stage 2, especially in the final two years, where there is a very good balance between factual learning and practical investigation. The pupils cover a lot of ground in Years 5 and 6, recording their work by means of accurately-presented reports, tables, diagrams and graphs. The pupils undertake independent investigations, showing a good ability to predict outcomes, control variables and evaluate their results. Their work shows secure understanding over a broad range of scientific knowledge, including for example the adaptation of animals and plants to different habitats and environmental factors, work on electrical conductivity and balanced forces.

108 Teaching of science in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall. It is better in Year 2, where science is taught as a separate lesson and teachers plan their work carefully to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities. These teachers are clear about the learning objectives for their lessons. In one lesson pupils were paired to observe similarities and differences between two animals; the most able pupils had to distinguish between two very similar animals, for instance a robin and a blue-tit. With an appropriate level of challenge for all groups, the pupils' understanding developed at a good pace. Year 1 teaching is less focused because lessons are organised so that different groups of pupils are working on different subjects at the same time and the teacher's attention is divided between them. The pupils' work in science tends to be dispersed throughout their topic books and folders in Years 1 and 2. Whilst cross-curricular links are strengthened, this does not help the pupils to make connections between the different scientific activities they undertake.

109 Teaching in Key Stage 2 is generally good, although an occasional unsatisfactory lesson was observed; it is better in the upper junior classes, where some very good teaching was seen. Good or very good teaching occurs in the lessons where teachers have clear, specific learning objectives, work is carefully targeted for different ability groups and the content challenges and interests pupils. This was particularly apparent in Year 6 where the pupils were introduced to microbes as either helpful or harmful agents. Here the teacher's enthusiasm and expertise were important factors in the success of the lesson. In another lesson, as a revision exercise pupils were challenged to devise a way of separating the constituents of Smarties. Skilled open-ended questioning prompted the pupils to think hard and to suggest some imaginative and practical solutions. In the single unsatisfactory lesson seen, the pupils' capabilities were under-estimated and the work lacked challenge.

110 Learning in each key stage is directly linked to the quality of teaching. In the good lessons pupils build on their previous knowledge and understanding to acquire new knowledge, develop skills and confidence and reinforce what they already know. Learning is limited in lessons which are less focused or where pupils are insufficiently challenged and time is wasted. When groups of pupils are pursuing a number of different lines of scientific investigation at once, as was seen in Year 3 lessons, energies tend to be dissipated and progress, although satisfactory, is more limited than it could be.

111 Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They listen attentively and work diligently. Although pupils are interested in the topics and enjoy the practical work, however, they can be reticent in answering questions and reluctant to offer their own ideas.

112 The curriculum for science is well-designed to ensure that pupils cover all required areas of study and have good opportunities for practical investigations. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils practise mathematical skills in measuring and recording results in a variety of graphs, and the literacy skill of precise report writing. Good use is made of ICT. The amount of time allocated to science in Key Stage 2 is appropriate, but in Key Stage 1 it is less than in most schools. This has contributed to below average standards in the recent past. There is a good procedure for assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding which is used to inform future curriculum and lesson planning. Results of formal tests are carefully analysed and the information used to modify the curriculum.

113 The co-ordinator has a good science background. She is conscientious in reviewing the curriculum regularly to ensure that it meets national requirements and is appropriate for pupils. She is having a positive effect in raising standards. She maintains resources that are good in range, quality and quantity which are stored for easy access by teachers.

## **ART**

114 Pupils' achievements in art are generally good throughout the school. In Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress and this is largely maintained in Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others.

115 In Year 1, pupils produce line drawings of skeletons to represent characters from *Funny Bones*. They are confident in using basic tools and materials such as scissors and glue, and finish their work effectively with drinking straws. Pupils also draw in charcoal, in the style of Lowry and gain an understanding of the techniques of different artists. Pupils in Year 2 improve their manipulative skills in their modelling of clay, in preparation for producing a clay animal. They learn how to roll clay and keep it moist, and how to apply a decorative finish with small marking tools.

116 In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 4 express their ideas when collaborating together to produce a woven pattern on a simple loom frame. They experiment with materials to find the most pleasing combinations of colour and texture. Year 6 pupils show increased accuracy in their work, creating a range of designs for a yogurt pot lid. Drawings are detailed and based on careful observation. Their work is modified successfully through group and teacher discussion.

117 The standard of teaching and learning is generally sound throughout the school, with some good lessons observed. Teachers' planning is good and well-focused on the steady development of skills. Good use of the plenary session at the end of lessons helps pupils to consolidate understanding and knowledge. Pupils are managed well, ensuring that concentrated effort is given to tasks. Teachers' subject knowledge is usually good, especially in Key Stage 1, where techniques are taught precisely and the activities chosen are relevant to the pupils' age and experience. Teachers use a good range of resources which helps to stimulate pupils and extend their creative ability. However, in the occasional unsuccessful lesson the pupils are not sufficiently challenged. The pace of the lesson is slow, tasks are undemanding and the organisation is unstructured. This results in unsatisfactory learning taking place.

118 Pupils have positive attitudes in art lessons. They are generally attentive, listening well to teachers' instructions and raising questions. They settle well to tasks and form good relationships, sharing materials maturely. Behaviour is usually good and often very good.

119 The school provides good opportunities for pupils' artistic development. The curriculum is well-established, broad and balanced, covering a good range of experiences in art, craft and design. Understanding of European art is developed well; however, emphasis on other cultures, with the exception of African art, is limited. Although a good range of artistic styles is presented to pupils, female artists tend to be under-represented within the curriculum. Sketch books are used effectively in Key Stage 2 to develop pupils' skills in observational drawing. Literacy skills are enhanced successfully by the use of evaluation and appraisal of artists' work. Art and design is well supported by ICT: for example, computer-generated symmetrical patterns have been successfully produced by pupils in Years 1 and 4.

120 There are good systems in place to assess pupils' work and monitor progress through the school. Learning resources are of good quality and generally sufficient to enhance pupils' learning in the school. The quality of displayed art work is good and a positive feature of the school. Pupils' work is carefully mounted, named and usually annotated to give an explanation of how the work was developed. The school has maintained high standards since the last inspection and still provides pupils with an enriched experience in art.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

121 Pupils make satisfactory progress through each key stage in designing, making and evaluating artefacts. They experience a good range of materials, including textiles, clay, wood, card and food. Pupils in Year 1 use play-dough to model animals, in Year 2 modelling skills are developed to make animals with textured coats from clay, whilst in Year 3 they design and make intricate Viking pendants from clay which are glazed. Year 6 pupils design and cost recipes for fruit-flavoured yoghurt which they have made in a science lesson. When making their recipes, pupils learn to break up the fruit using a variety of implements, for example, graters, peelers and sharp knives; the results tasted very good. In some activities older pupils are inhibited from developing cutting skills by using inappropriate scissors for the task. There is insufficient teaching in the safe use of craft knives.

122 Teaching in both key stages is sound. It is less satisfactory in those lessons where groups of pupils undertake work in different subjects at the same time, however, because in these circumstances teachers are unable to focus sufficiently on specific skills development.

123 Pupils enjoy the tasks set them. Their behaviour is very good. They use tools and materials carefully and safely, and clear up sensibly. They produce neatly annotated designs and evaluate their own and others' products constructively.

124 The curriculum is sound and there are good links with other subjects. There is a procedure for whole class assessment but this does not focus sufficiently on individual pupils' skills development, especially in cutting and joining skills. Resources are adequate and appropriate. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has only recently taken over responsibility for the subject. She has good ideas for development, but has not yet had time to make a significant difference.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

125 Achievement is satisfactory at both key stages, and the sound standards described at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Although only one lesson was observed in Key Stage 2, a judgement has been reached after analysing pupils' work, school documentation, reviewing teachers' planning and records, and after discussions with the co-ordinator and pupils.

126 Five-year olds in the reception classes observe and investigate the school grounds before investigating the quality of the local environment in Year 1. They observe buildings and local amenities, then discuss how they would improve environmental issues such as litter and traffic. By the age of seven, pupils have looked at the similarities and differences of villages, towns and cities. They effectively develop these skills when visiting the village of Arley, which is compared and contrasted with Milking Bank: 'Do you know, they haven't got a school hall, and there is only one shop!'

127 Mapping skills are particularly well-developed from simple routes based on the immediate locality. The pupils use labels in Year 1 and progress to the use of keys in Year 2, where pupils know the countries of the British Isles. They know how to locate the main mountains and rivers, and have a good understanding of where to find major cities and their own town, Dudley. They understand the use of simple keys and are beginning to use symbols. Computer programs using 'Logo' are used to determine direction and location. Four-figure co-ordinates are developed through Key Stage 2 until pupils in Year 6 are aware of the need for six figure co-ordinates when identifying a position accurately on an Ordnance Survey map. Their understanding of the world is satisfactory. They know oceans and continents and explain the main physical features such as rivers and mountain ranges, and

climate patterns. World maps and atlases are used well when pupils study such topics as the Caribbean and rainforests.

128 In Years 3 and 4 pupils have a clear understanding of settlement and can explain why towns and villages are located where they are, with particular reference to Dudley and Gornal. Their topic on rivers includes an in depth study of the River Severn, together with the effect of flooding on Shrewsbury and the immediate environment. By the age of eleven, pupils use persuasive writing well to discuss environmental issues such as deforestation and its effects on local communities. When studying farming in the Caribbean and Africa, pupils are aware of the effect of climate when contrasting and comparing tropical areas with the West Midlands.

129 Teaching observed during the inspection was good and provided stimulating learning experiences. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use the school's range of resources effectively. Detailed lesson planning provides clear learning objectives for pupils of differing abilities. Higher attaining pupils are now extended, particularly when developing study and research skills at the end of Key Stage 2 where computers are used effectively to develop learning. There is a positive strategy to concentrate on the application of geographical skills. A variety of teaching strategies motivates pupils, and classes are managed well. Opportunities are planned to assess what pupils know and understand, with gains in skills and knowledge recorded and then used to report to parents annually. Where teaching is very good, as in a Year 2 lesson, pupils gained a deeper understanding of the British Isles by sharing and locating places visited on a map.

130 Visits contribute to a greater understanding of the locality and contrasting areas nearby. First hand investigations enrich the curriculum. Pupils compare and contrast their own environment with that of others, as when they visit the village of Arley in Key Stage 1 or undertake local studies on Gornal and Dudley in Key Stage 2.

131 The co-ordinator has made a positive contribution to maintaining standards in spite of the emphasis which is now given to core subjects. She has evaluated the quality of teaching and learning under the normal review cycle; analysed pupils' work, and monitored the effectiveness of teachers' planning. Changes are well in hand for the introduction of Curriculum 2000 at the beginning of the new school year. She is aware of the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to contribute to class discussions and for wider use of information and communication technology to support learning.

## **HISTORY**

132 Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and better in Key Stage 2, with good standards achieved by the older pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Overall progress is good for all pupils including those with special educational needs.

133 By the age of seven, pupils have a well-developed sense of time sequence. They relate experiences from beyond their living memory by talking confidently about what their parents and grandparents were doing in the 1960s, and relate events from the lives of famous people such as Queen Victoria and Florence Nightingale. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils accurately link periods they have studied such as the Ancient Greeks, Romans, Vikings, Tudors and Victorians, and study the characteristic features of societies and periods. In discussion they describe well the legacies of the Greece and Rome, commenting on the Olympic games, the development of democracy and road building. There is evidence of a much deeper understanding of chronology since the last inspection with pupils using time lines confidently.

134 Year 4 pupils show a developing understanding of the way the past is represented by selecting and linking information from historical sources such as texts, maps and photographs to trace the effects of the Spanish invasions on the lives of the Aztecs. Pupils have recorded this information imaginatively, as if they were involved in the invasion. In a Year 6 lesson pupils investigated the development of radio, television, telephone and computers in their media studies. Good research skills were evident including the use of the Internet. Skills of historical enquiry are good.

135 Overall teaching is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Clear lesson objectives ensure that pupils build on their previous gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. Where teaching methods are good, pupils are managed well, with brisk introductions giving many more opportunities for pupils to research, explore and discuss. Good examples were evident in Year 6 where research and discussion played a significant part in the lesson. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the learning experience with holiday assignments preparing pupils for the topic to be studied. Teachers use the summing up period of lessons very well. Consistent and systematic procedures for recording gains in skills and knowledge are now in place which are contributing to the raising of standards.

136 The co-ordinator gives positive leadership. She handles a budget, checks planning, monitors teaching and learning under a three year review cycle, and has planned for the changes necessary for Curriculum 2000. Resources have been improved since the last inspection, although information and communication technology was underused at Key Stage 1 during the inspection. Visits and visitors play an important part in providing first hand experiences for pupils. In discussion with pupils the 'Sixties Day' and a visit by the 'Tudors' have evidently made a significant impact on their learning. There is a good policy and scheme of work that includes all the requirements of the National Curriculum.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

137 From a secure starting point at five, the pupils make very good progress through Key Stage 1, achieving high standards that are well above average by seven. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress and standards are above average by Year 6. These high standards are one of the strengths of the school. There has been significant improvement in provision and achievement since the last inspection.

138 These outcomes are all the more creditable because it is only a few months since the school had major additions to its computer hardware and software, as part of an initiative by the Dudley Grid for Learning. Since then staff and pupils have successfully changed over to an entirely new system. Underpinning the school's success has been a highly effective programme of professional development for all staff planned by the headteacher and ICT coordinator. Staff are now very secure in their personal expertise and practical skills, and this has led to increasingly ambitious teaching which is helping to raise standards further.

139 Older pupils use ICT confidently in many ways and for a range of purposes. Throughout Key Stage 2 the pupils use computer software or the Internet confidently to seek information as part of their studies in a wide range of subjects. The pupils have secure word-processing skills, and by Years 5 and 6 a good understanding of how to present information for a given audience by combining text, graphics and photographs. Computer Club gives older pupils extra time to experiment with use of the digital camera, to download graphics from the Internet and to produce headings, using a desk-top publishing program. The pupils use graphics programs as part of their work in art and design, and 'Logo' to support work on maps and routes in geography. Pupils make effective use of spreadsheets to present and analyse information, for example to establish the links between mean rainfall and temperature at different times of year in the Caribbean. They have a good understanding of the importance of accuracy when entering data, and know how to present their findings in the form of graphs or tables. In a recent collaborative project with a local college, older pupils have used computer-linked sensors to monitor and plot light levels in different parts of the classroom, printing off their findings in a variety of graphic forms.

140 Standards are very high for the age-group by seven, with good achievement from the reception classes onwards. Pupils in reception and Year 1 use the computer to practise their skills in mathematics and language, using such programs as *My First Amazing Dictionary*. Skills in working with various computer programs and controlling the mouse are built up systematically through a range of enjoyable activities. By Year 2 the pupils are working with almost complete independence. With no adult help, they know how to log on and select the program they want from a menu by clicking onto the appropriate icons. They save, print and retrieve their work unaided. In discussion seven-year olds demonstrate how they would go about setting up a simple data-base, decide upon categories and headings and present their findings as a bar chart, pie chart or line graph.

141 ICT forms a regular part of the timetable for each class, but it was only possible to see three lessons during the inspection, which were not necessarily representative. One of these lessons was unsatisfactory, but this was because of a failure to weigh up the pupils' mathematical understanding accurately. Both the other lessons seen were good, and the progress being made by pupils suggests that this is typical of the work done at both key stages. In a good lesson at Key Stage 1, the teacher gave very clear instructions about how to derive information from an encyclopaedia on CD-ROM, using the 'search' command. The pupils listened intently and, later in the week, recalled exactly what to do and could demonstrate how to conduct a search without adult help. Their grasp of how to use key words was impressive for their age. A strength of the teaching was the careful explanation

of how computer systems work, including details about the server, and how information is stored on compact disk. Highly effective use was made of pupils to demonstrate procedures, so that the attention of the whole class was sustained for a considerable period. In an equally successful session in Key Stage 2, pupils were taught succinctly how to utilise shortcuts within the *Excel* program. Here a strength was good planning to extend the more capable pupils. Again, the pupils attended closely and learned quickly. Useful incidental learning takes place when staff use computers for a range of purposes, as when one teacher registered her Year 2 class directly onto the computer.

142 The subject is led very effectively, with major changes implemented successfully through good planning by the co-ordinator and senior staff. Banks of new computers have been thoughtfully located. Curriculum development is keeping pace, with the introduction of new national guidelines as the basis for long-term planning. There are good arrangements for assessing pupils' achievements at the end of a block or unit or work, but a useful system for charting the development of individual skills has been temporarily discontinued. Re-introduction of an updated record would be an advantage and support individual learning further.

## **MUSIC**

143 Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress at both key stages. At Key Stage 1 pupils develop their listening skills and discuss the feelings evoked by different pieces of music. They recognise that different instruments have a different quality of sound, and appreciate that contrasting dynamics and textures are used to convey different moods. Pupils listen appreciatively to different forms of music from an early age. Reception children, for example, listened to an extract from *Carnival of the Animals* and discussed which animal they felt had been portrayed, and Year 1 pupils listened to two contrasting versions of *Jupiter* from *The Planets Suite* - one orchestral and one electronic - and expressed their own preferences clearly and sensibly. Pupils listen to contrasting rhythms and clap different rhythmic patterns accurately. They sing simple songs from memory, and play loudly and softly on a variety of percussion instruments.

144 At Key Stage 2, pupils listen to a range of instruments and a variety of music from different times and places. They sing more complicated songs, and improve the quality of their singing by varying the dynamics, sustaining notes at the end of phrases, and pronouncing the words clearly. One song was sung in both English and French. During hymn practice pupils sing a variety of modern worship songs very tunefully, with good diction, accurate rhythms and sensitive variation in the dynamics. Their expression and use of mood is of a high quality. Pupils invent complicated rhythmic patterns, and copy these patterns by clapping them out. They use a variety of percussion instruments to compose and perform their own music and record their own compositions using correct musical notation.

145 Pupils of all ages have plenty of opportunity to appreciate music during school assemblies, and appropriate music is used well to create a calm and meditative atmosphere for collective worship. Pupils regularly enter and leave assemblies to a variety of recorded music. The names of the pieces and composers are written up at the front of the hall, and opportunities are taken to discuss the music. Worship songs at whole-school assemblies are chosen carefully so that even the youngest children can join in the clapping and other actions enthusiastically.

146 Teaching seen during the inspection was good. In the lessons, assemblies and hymn practices observed, teachers' knowledge and understanding were generally good, though individual teachers' musical expertise varies. Teachers plan their work effectively and

individual lessons have sound learning objectives. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods, and make good use of a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments. Pupils are well managed, and good use is made of day-to-day assessment to evaluate pupils' work and to improve the standard of their work. As a result of enthusiastic teaching, pupils have good attitudes to music at both key stages, and enjoy their lessons and hymn practices. They are well motivated and join in enthusiastically. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and behave very well when singing or playing musical instruments.

147 The music co-ordinator provides good leadership of the subject. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' termly plans and hears pupils singing and playing during hymn practices, school assemblies and concerts. The policy document and scheme of work are currently being updated to incorporate the needs of Curriculum 2000. The existing scheme helps pupils to develop musical skills in a logical progression. Termly assessment of music skills takes place and plans are in hand to introduce assessment of performance through the use of recordings of pupils' work.

148 The school has a good selection of recorded music, and a good range of percussion and other instruments, including instruments from a range of non-western cultures. Good use is made of the dedicated music room. Attractive wall displays encourage pupils' appreciation of music. A number of pupils have keyboard, brass, strings, woodwind, guitars and percussion lessons with visiting teachers. Visiting instrumentalists from the local peripatetic music service introduce pupils to a variety of instruments and perform for the whole school. There is a good range of extra-curricular musical activities including a choir and recorder groups and the recently appointed co-ordinator is working hard to increase the pupils' experiences. Pupils perform annually at Dudley Castle as part of the local schools' concert and the new choir will sing for the first time at the school's Summer Fair this year.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

149 Pupils make good progress in physical education in both key stages. They know the value of a healthy life-style and the effects of exercise on the body, and also the importance of safety procedures when moving about or using apparatus. The good standards reported at the time of the last inspection have been well sustained.

150 In Key Stage 1 pupils move into space in different ways and learn to turn, jump and roll. They develop increasing ball skills and by the end of the key stage can work cooperatively with a partner. Pupils in a Year 2 class were observed as they practised rolling a ball to each other and learned dodging techniques for team games.

151 In Key Stage 2, pupils build on their earlier work. Pupils from Year 3 were learning to aim and throw correctly. Several really persevered to improve their total of successful throws, and appreciated what others had achieved. In another lesson, Year 5 pupils efficiently learned the skills needed for tennis. They held and used the racquet correctly and placed their feet and body to achieve a good shot. The gymnastic skills of travelling and balancing are practised and refined. Pupils from Year 5 were observed as they learned to roll sideways. They created a sequence and the most able demonstrated very good control and agility. Swimming has a secure place in the curriculum, and very few pupils leave the school unable to swim at least 25 yards. Last year the school successfully competed in a local gala. Orienteering is introduced in Year 5 and pupils experience outdoor activities during their residential visit in Year 6. A new venture this year has been entering the local cross-country trials.

152 Teaching of physical education is good overall, with examples of very good practice in Key Stage 2. In the best lessons a lively pace is maintained and all pupils are encouraged

to improve. In one such lesson the pupils learned quickly, so the teacher extended the plan, introducing new skills to maintain the element of challenge. In another lesson there was an imbalance in the teacher's input to the single gender groups, with more attention given to girls than boys. This resulted in some disenchantment and limited learning on the part of the boys.

153 The school values physical education and has maintained generous curriculum time for the subject. There is a comprehensive policy and a good scheme of work, based on a curriculum document drawn up by the LEA. Well-attended clubs for football and netball are run by members of staff. In addition extra activities for which a charge is made are arranged by Dudley Sports Link and by a local dance tutor. Pupils from the reception classes danced at a local festival last year and were involved in the Dudley Millennium celebrations. Parents enjoy and support the annual Sports Day. Resources are plentiful and up-to-date. They are well maintained and kept in purpose-built stores adjoining the hall and playground. Playgrounds are well maintained and include areas marked out for games.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

154 Pupils' attainment is in line with standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages.

155 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils know about the main Christian traditions and beliefs by hearing stories from both the Old and New Testaments. Pupils know the story of Jesus' birth, for example, and learn about the Easter story. They learn about special occasions, special places and special people, including their own personally chosen 'special people'. Pupils in Year 2 explore stories of the Creation, both from Genesis and from the Australian Aboriginal tradition. They learn to pray and to sing hymns and modern worship songs in assemblies. There is a strong moral theme through the work in Key Stage 1 and pupils are expected from an early age to show care and respect for others.

156 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils know the significance and meaning of some of the main teachings and traditions of Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism. Pupils in Years 5, for instance, study the significance of the Resurrection and of Pentecost and write expressive poetry about the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit and how they would cleanse the world in which they live. Pupils in Year 6 explore the different qualities of leadership, and great leaders, as they discuss the leadership of Jesus and His relationship with His disciples. They sensitively explore the feelings of guilt and shame experienced by the disciples and relate these ideas very effectively to their own lives. They compare places of worship in Judaism, Hinduism, and Christianity, and study the significance of the symbolism found within the different religions. Younger pupils in this key stage write their own prayers including some for the Millennium.

157 The quality of teaching is sound overall and towards the end of Key Stage 2 much of it is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the major world religions, and plan their lessons conscientiously. Pupils are well-managed, and teachers work hard to involve them all in discussion. Good use is made of a variety of artefacts, and pupils are encouraged to think for themselves by careful questioning, analysis, and reflection. Teachers take great care to engender a high level of respect for all opinions and beliefs and this is reflected in the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Sound use is made of day-to-day assessment to cater for the individual needs of pupils, and pupils' knowledge and understanding is assessed at the end of each topic.

158 As a result of sound teaching, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress at both key stages. They develop an awareness of their own

feelings, and an understanding of celebration and worship. At Key Stage 2, they develop knowledge of the similarities and differences between the major world religions, and learn to respect the beliefs and customs of others. There is, however, a need for a greater contact to be established, through first hand experience, of both Christianity and other major faiths.

159 The newly appointed co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and will have opportunities, at an appropriate point in the monitoring cycle, to observe her colleagues teaching. The school's religious education policy promotes understanding and tolerance of the major world faiths, and provides opportunities for extending pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. There is a good range of resources including information books, posters and artefacts for studying the major world religions.