

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLY SOULS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Acocks Green

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103429

Headteacher: Mrs S M Berti

Reporting inspector: Tony Painter
21512

Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 July 2002

Inspection number: 191578

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior school

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Mallard Close
Acocks Green
Birmingham
West Midlands

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Rev Father David Tams

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

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Margaret Manning 8943	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Sonja Oyen 7167	Team Inspector	English English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?
Mike Wehrmeyer 15015	Team inspector	Science Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Carole Jarvis 27276	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Design and technology	How well are pupils taught?
Kath Hurt 24895	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Physical education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This large voluntary aided Roman Catholic school takes pupils between 4 and 11 years of age. With 413 pupils on roll, it is larger than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are mostly white and come from a wide area of social diversity around the school, many from disadvantaged areas. The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals, at 28 per cent, is high compared to the national average. Five pupils come from families where English is an additional language, but no pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The attainment of children joining the school is in line with that expected of children of their age. One hundred and four pupils have identified special educational needs, which is a little higher than average. None of these has a statement of special educational need.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is good and provides good value for money. It gives pupils a very good foundation for their personal development. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic in their lessons and their behaviour is very good. Good leadership and management are ensuring effective teamwork and a clear, shared view of how the school can continue to improve. Good teaching overall gives a rich range of experiences that helps pupils of all abilities to learn well and improve their standards of attainment.

What the school does well

- An extremely positive atmosphere develops pupils' excellent attitudes and very good behaviour.
- Consistently good teaching in the reception classes gives children a good start to their learning.
- Throughout the school good teaching helps pupils to improve their standards of attainment.
- Very good leadership ensures effective teamwork to promote improvements.
- Strong links with parents support pupils' learning well.
- Pupils with special educational needs get good support.

What could be improved

- The use of detailed information on what pupils can and cannot do to plan lessons and school developments.
- Some teaching could be improved to the higher standards in other lessons.

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 February 1997 when weaknesses were identified in pupils' independence, the planning of the curriculum and the long-term development of the school. The school has sustained its strengths and made satisfactory progress overall. It has taken effective action on all four key issues although aspects, including the development of pupils' independence in their learning, remain as areas for further refinement. Improved systems and procedures to guide the everyday work of the teachers are helping to improve much teaching. As a result, standards of attainment are rising, particularly in the reception classes and in writing, art, physical education and geography through the school. The school development plan includes a longer view of what the school needs to do, although the link between critical monitoring and clear priorities could be stronger.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	C	C	A
Mathematics	B	C	C	B
Science	C	B	C	B

Key

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

Children enter the school with average attainment and make good progress in the reception classes. By the time they start in Year 1, they are achieving higher standards than expected for their age in communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development.

Overall, attainment by the ages of 7 and 11 is around the national average, reflected in the standards shown in the National Curriculum tests at these ages. The school's analysis of individual pupils' progress shows that most make good progress through the school, meeting or exceeding their predicted results. However, closer analysis shows that variations in teaching mean that pupils in some classes make bigger gains than others. The school is undertaking greater analysis of results and this is helping teachers to set higher and more challenging targets for pupils' attainment. As a result, standards are rising, particularly in the youngest classes because teaching in the reception classes is consistently effective. Standards in writing are improving through the school's greater attention to providing good opportunities in other subjects. Observations during the inspection suggest that the higher targets are achievable with more consistent teaching.

Those very few pupils who are new to English are supported effectively to integrate into their classes and they learn very quickly. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through effective teaching and support.

Pupils' attainment in most subjects is currently around that expected of their age and they achieve satisfactorily. In geography, physical education and art and design, pupils achieve higher standards because teachers provide a wider range of effective opportunities for pupils to learn.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have excellent attitudes to lessons and show great enthusiasm and interest in all activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are extremely polite and courteous. Behaviour is very good both in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils have excellent relationships with each other. They develop high levels of maturity and sense of responsibility throughout the school.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory.

Excellent relationships form the foundation of the very strong positive atmosphere that reflects the school's mission statement. This helps all pupils to develop very positive attitudes and grow in maturity.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	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.

Good teaching overall meets the needs of all pupils and helps them to learn well. Although there is good or better teaching in all year groups, the quality of teaching is inconsistent and this affects the standards reached by pupils. For example, teaching in both English and mathematics is good overall and teachers generally make effective use of national guidance in literacy and numeracy. However, inconsistencies in teaching, such as in different classes in Years 2 and 6, lead to different levels of results in the National Curriculum tests. In the reception classes, however, teaching is consistently good and this enables children to make good progress in all the areas of learning.

Throughout the school, teachers' very good relationships successfully encourage pupils to learn. Organisation and planning of lessons are good and teachers use a wide range of resources to interest pupils and help them to learn. Planning has particularly improved through clearer identification of what pupils need to learn, often effectively shared with pupils. Some marking is positive and gives pupils information on what they need to do to improve their work, but this is not consistent in all classes. Weaker teaching makes less effective use of information on how well pupils are doing to match work precisely to their needs and promote better progress.

There is very effective teaching of pupils with special educational needs through well-targeted withdrawal groups and effective support staff. As a result, pupils make good progress. Good support for the very few pupils with English as an additional language ensures their rapid progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Teachers plan a good range of activities, making effective use of national guidance and the school's systems.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school provides effective support for all pupils with special educational needs and, as a result, they make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The very few pupils who are learning English are given very good support that is helping them to settle and learn very quickly. They play a full part in all lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision ensures that pupils, whatever their backgrounds, become mature and responsible. All staff provide good examples of positive attitudes for pupils to follow.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well. The staff value all pupils as individuals and create a friendly working atmosphere that helps all pupils to feel safe and valued.

A rich and varied range of classroom activities for all pupils meets their needs and is enhanced by many good extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors. The school's links with parents and the local community are strong and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good management with strong leadership have helped the school to maintain its strengths and improve. Good teamwork ensures the school provides a good atmosphere for learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors take a more active role in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses to fulfil their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Improved analysis of results and systems of monitoring are giving more information on how well the school is doing. The school could analyse this information better and use it more effectively to indicate what needs to be done to improve the curriculum, teaching and attainment.
The strategic use of resources	Good financial management and effective reviews of spending ensure that the school uses resources effectively.

The staffing, accommodation and resources are good. The school applies the principles of best value well in appropriate tendering spending systems. Evaluation of the impact of spending on teaching and standards is less developed.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers have high expectations and pupils become mature and responsible. Good teaching helps pupils to make good progress. Leadership and management are good. Parents are comfortable approaching the school with any problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant issues were raised.

Parents returned 194 questionnaires (47 per cent of those sent out). Thirteen parents attended the pre-inspection meeting for parents. The inspection team agrees with the very positive views expressed by parents. Teaching is good overall, although there are some variations between classes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of children on entry to the school is average, although the range is broad. Consistently good teaching ensures that all children, including those needing extra help, make good progress in the reception classes. Most children reach the goals set for them in all of the areas of learning. Many children exceed the goals in their personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy.
2. Boys and girls make good progress in the infant and junior classes, reflecting the overall good teaching in the school and maintaining the standards shown in the last report. The school's analysis of the attainment of individual pupils shows that most make good progress through the school, reaching or exceeding their predicted results. The school is undertaking greater analysis of all results and this is helping teachers to continue to set higher and more challenging targets for pupils' attainment. For example, the targets set for the 11-year-olds in 2003 are considerably higher than current attainment levels. As a result, standards are rising through the school, particularly in the youngest classes as a result of effective teaching in the reception classes. Observations during the inspection suggest that the higher targets are achievable with more consistent teaching.
3. The school's performances in the National Curriculum tests at ages 7 and 11 have varied a little from year to year. This has generally been the result of the different relative attainments of the groups of pupils involved. The overall picture, however, has been of average performance when compared to all schools nationally. The results have been above average when compared with similar schools. Variations in teaching, particularly in Years 2 and 6, have had an impact on the school's results in these tests in 2002. In particular, the school did not manage to reach its target for attainment in English. Although writing at age 7 has improved as a result of the school's emphasis on this, results in other tests have not made significant improvements. More detailed analysis shows that some pupils have made very good progress and are achieving very well, while pupils in the other class in each year group have made only satisfactory progress. This has a significant impact on the overall results of the school.
4. Standards in English are below average at the end of Year 2 and average at the end of Year 6. This reflects the schools' results in the National Curriculum tests in 2001 and 2002. Good teaching overall ensures that pupils make effective progress throughout the school, particularly in learning basic skills of reading and writing. However, variations in the quality of teaching lead to differences in the achievements of pupils in different classes. Although standards in reading are better than those in writing, the school's recent efforts to promote writing are having a positive effect. A significant proportion of pupils in Year 2 are now achieving higher levels than expected nationally and a higher percentage of Year 6 pupils have done better than expected for their age. Throughout the school, pupils' presentation skills are good. Pupils learn to read quickly and higher-attaining pupils do well in all year groups. By the end of Year 6, pupils are confident readers who can express clear opinions about their reading.
5. Mathematics standards are average by the ages of 7 and 11 and have improved from the standards in the 2001 National Curriculum tests. The results in the 2002 tests show improvements in Year 2 and higher proportions of pupils achieving the nationally expected Level 4 in Year 6. There have been swings in attainment in mathematics over the last four years, but overall the pupils' attainment at age 11 was average. Teachers' effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive effect on pupils' mental arithmetic skills

and pupils are better at explaining their thinking. However, the variations in teaching restrict the school's ability to raise overall standards consistently.

6. Standards in science are average when pupils are aged 7 and 11 years. This reflects the school's results in the National Curriculum assessments in both 2001 and 2002. Standards are rising as a result of new systems to guide teachers' planning. A clear structure with explicitly stated targets is helping to ensure pupils' progress through the school. However, variations in teaching, for example between classes in the same year group, place limitations on the extent to which standards are rising currently.
7. Pupils' attainment in most other subjects is around the national expectations at the ages of 7 and 11 years. In geography and physical education, attainment is above that generally found by the age of 11 years. This is because teachers plan thoroughly to develop a range of pupils' skills through the junior classes. In art and design, pupils achieve above the expected levels at ages 7 and 11 years. Pupils have good challenging experiences in a wide range of media. In all subjects, there are some signs of improving standards resulting from the clearer approach to the curriculum.
8. Improved teaching is ensuring that pupils achieve well through the school. Teachers use national guidance in English and mathematics effectively to target work to improve pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy. Pupils have good opportunities to apply their developing literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Pupils' good literacy skills, in particular, make a positive contribution to their learning in other subjects. For example, pupils research confidently for information in books in history and geography lessons. They write up descriptions of their activities and experiments in science and this is a significant contribution to their learning. Pupils use their developing mathematics skills effectively in lessons such as science, design and technology and information and communication technology. In Year 2, for example, pupils produce information books with good links to their work in art and design. Information and communication technology lessons in the computer suite are generally linked well to pupils' learning in other subjects. Pupils develop skills in accessing information from the Internet and setting out their work, and these lessons make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school because of the good support they receive, particularly in well-targeted withdrawal groups. In infant classes, pupils who have early difficulties with literacy skills are helped to improve their reading and writing. By the age of 11, pupils who need additional help with their learning become more fluent in their reading, improve the quality and accuracy of their writing and increase their competency in mathematics. This overall improvement contributes to their progress in other subjects. The very few pupils who are new to English are given strong and effective support in their lessons to help them make very good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes to school are excellent, maintaining the strong position outlined in the last report. They show a very high level of enthusiasm for school and taking part in the lessons and the extra-curricular activities that it offers. The after-school sports clubs, such as football and cricket, are well attended. Pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work and always try to make sure it is neat. In addition to their class work, a few Year 3 pupils had made a special effort to do extra research on their Roman topic without being asked and they did this beautifully. Year 2 pupils were particularly keen to show how well they could learn in a numeracy workshop for parents and their behaviour and attitudes were impeccable.
11. Pupils behave very well in and around school. They are extremely polite and courteous to adults, holding doors open and saying 'good morning' when they pass you in the corridors.

They play very well together at break times with lots of lively games using the play equipment that they negotiated through the school council. Behaviour in lessons is very good from the youngest children up to the junior pupils. In a Year 2 English lesson using a play script, pupils were totally absorbed and were disappointed when the reading had to stop. Even if a lesson was not so interesting, as happened at times, pupils behaved well. They persevered well with what they were expected to do. No disruption to lessons was ever seen, although occasionally one or two pupils were a little distracted. Pupils are used to the clear routines and do as they are told. Bullying is not a problem and the school has not had reason to exclude any pupils for misbehaviour. Parents' high opinions of the standards of behaviour in school were confirmed during the inspection.

12. As pupils move up the school they become very mature in the way they accept responsibilities and they develop excellent relationships with each other. For example, the school council enables many pupils to represent their classmates and take a real responsibility for what happens in the school. Pupils with special educational needs or those whose home language is not English are welcomed and play a full part in all activities. Boys and girls from different walks of life get on very well together. They listen to each other very well in lessons and increasingly have the confidence to speak in class and assemblies as they get older. This is because they show respect for each other's views. In one class, if pupils are uncertain about the answer to a problem they confidently choose a 'help partner' who is willing to explain the answer to them and to the class. Pupils enjoy their duties as prefects and, for example, happily took their turn to help organise games for younger pupils at lunchtime. Year 6 pupils enjoy reading with younger pupils and take their responsibilities in developing the relationships very seriously. Pupils are less adept at showing initiative, partly through lack of opportunity, but respond very well when told what to do.
13. Attendance at school is satisfactory. It is now in line with that seen in primary schools nationally and there is very little unauthorised absence. Pupils come to school in good time and registration takes place very promptly so that lessons can get off to a good start.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good. Just over half the lessons seen were good or better and about a fifth of lessons very good or better. Only two of the remaining lessons were unsatisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is some good or better teaching in every year group, but the quality of teaching is inconsistent and this affects the standards reached by some pupils. Teaching in English, mathematics, science, geography, history and art is good overall, but variable. Teachers implement the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies effectively, but the inconsistency of teaching in these subjects affects pupils' rates of learning throughout the school. In the Foundation Stage, however, teaching is consistently good and this enables children to make good progress in all the areas of learning leading to the early learning goals.
15. All teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and this contributes to pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. Teachers have a good rapport with pupils and value their answers and suggestions in lessons. They provide time for pupils to reply to questions and to think out their ideas. This encourages pupils to want to learn, listen carefully and share their learning with others. It contributes to the very positive learning atmosphere that helps all pupils to want to do their best. Similarly, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and they respond very positively by behaving well in lessons, as well as other areas of the school. Very good use of praise and encouragement builds pupils' confidence and enthusiasm for learning. These are consistent strengths in teaching. However, a few teachers use unnecessary control strategies to quieten pupils when they do not require it.

16. Teachers plan and prepare lessons well. Thorough planning provides a clear structure to lessons, identifies what pupils are to learn, how they can achieve this and the resources needed. Teachers begin their lessons by sharing these learning intentions with pupils. They ensure pupils are clear about what they are to learn by writing the new learning in appropriately simple language on the white boards and encouraging them to read them aloud together. Teachers often refer to the learning intentions during lessons and most use discussions at the end of lessons to question how well pupils have learnt. This helps pupils to review what they have done and begin to understand how well they are learning. Teachers use resources well. For example, using small white boards and overhead projectors helps pupils to remain alert and interested.
17. Marking is most effective when teachers provide comments to indicate pupils' achievements and explain what they need to do next. However, this is inconsistent across year groups and throughout the school, with better teachers using it most effectively. These teachers also use the information from assessments to show what pupils know, understand and can do to plan their lessons and set targets for pupils. This results in their pupils making good progress. However, other teachers rely too heavily on the guidance from the schemes of work to plan lessons. This may result in work being too hard for lower achieving pupils or lacking challenge for brighter pupils. For example, when pupils in a Year 2 class were working out money sums, the brighter pupils were not encouraged to record their totals correctly when the answer was over one pound. Progress slows for pupils in these classes and this affects the rate of learning. Good gains in learning made one year may be lost the following year.
18. The classroom assistants and other volunteer helpers provide valuable support because they are clear what they are doing. In a design and technology lesson, for example, the classroom assistant and helpers enabled pupils to make and decorate biscuits. Effective questioning focused pupils' learning and clear instructions enabled them to read and follow a recipe. The support for pupils with special educational needs is good and enables them to make good progress with the other pupils. The clear identification of work in withdrawal groups that is closely matched to pupils' needs helps them to make very good progress in these sessions. Teachers and classroom assistants support all pupils with special educational needs well in lessons in their normal classrooms. However, the tasks that these pupils are given are not consistently well matched to pupils' past attainment. This sometimes restricts their learning, as they must rely on additional support to help them to get going. The few pupils with English as an additional language are effectively supported to make any necessary language gains in order to learn with the other pupils. The strong relationships within all classrooms ensure that they are well integrated into all the life of the school.
19. Clear explanations with good examples and precise language develop pupils' vocabulary and help them to learn effectively. For example, Year 6 pupils developed and refined jumping skills very effectively in a physical education lesson because they were very clear about what they had to do. Year 1 pupils talked about their 'lever' mechanisms and 'evaluated' their models because their teacher ensured they understood the correct terms. Effective questioning helps to reinforce pupils' earlier learning and enables teachers to assess their understanding. Teachers make good use of questioning to extend pupils' understanding and handle their responses well.
20. A brisk pace to lessons ensures pupils have a sense of purpose and work hard. It encourages pupils to settle to work quickly, make the most of the time available and concentrate well. However, there are times when pupils sit too long at the beginnings of lessons. Although behaviour is good, pupils begin to fidget and concentration is not as good as it could be. Teachers encourage pupils to work independently with tasks, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons. Pupils do this well and concentrate on what they have to do. Teachers provide homework tasks to extend pupils' learning and to

research on their own. Pupils have homework across all subjects; for example, Year 5 pupils researched Greek food for design and technology. However, in some lessons such as design and technology or information and communication technology, teachers direct activities too closely. This enables pupils to learn new skills well, but they have too few opportunities to use and apply the new learning to independent tasks. This limits the opportunities to try out their ideas and to take responsibility for some of their own learning.

21. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good and, sometimes, very good, particularly in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. All the adults have a good understanding of how young children learn and what they need to feel secure. The teachers and classroom assistants work together to plan lessons and organise activities. They carefully assess the children's achievements and identify what they need to learn next. They use this information to plan activities for children of different abilities and this ensures they focus the learning for each particular group according to their needs. There is a good emphasis on teaching literacy skills. For example, in shared reading, teachers form targets for the children and then ask questions that enable the children to achieve them and, therefore, make good progress. Effective questioning leads to useful discussions and involves all the children. Teachers provide challenging tasks, use resources well and have high expectations of what the children can achieve. This enables all children to make good progress in the Foundation Stage.

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

22. There have been significant improvements in planning for the curriculum since the last inspection. The school teaches all the subjects it should in sufficient depth for the ages and stages of development of its pupils. Pupils show a keen interest and enthusiasm for learning because the rich curriculum means that lessons are interesting. Agreed schemes of work are now in place for all subjects and aspects so that teachers have clear guidance on which to base their topic and lesson planning. This includes the Foundation Stage, where improved planning to the areas of learning for young children is resulting in good progress in the reception classes. Planning for outdoor play is now much better, though still fairly restricted by the limited facilities outside. Teachers identify opportunities where pupils will develop their literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects. This is currently having more impact in literacy than numeracy. For example, writing skills are successfully promoted when pupils write about making a Greek salad in design and technology, about land use in geography or letters from the point of view of a mother to her son in a Roman fort in history. Teachers use time well, although occasionally some teaching time is lost when lessons finish unnecessarily early to prepare for lunch or playtime.
23. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities that are very well supported by a committed and enthusiastic staff. A wide range of clubs, sporting competitions and visits are on offer, mainly to older pupils. The many sporting opportunities make a significant contribution to pupils' physical education and reflect well in the good standards pupils attain by the time they leave the school. Pupils benefit from expert coaching in football, cricket and other sports. They learn to compete fairly and enthusiastically against themselves and others with much success. The art, guitar and drama clubs provide good opportunities for pupils' creative development. Residential visits to France and Alton Castle widen pupils' horizons and provide valuable opportunities for them to develop independence and teamwork skills. Other experiences, like courses at the Children's University and visits to Birmingham Art Gallery, provide a further boost to pupils' knowledge and understanding.
24. The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Detailed information on pupils' progress enables teachers to identify potential problems quickly.

Pupils identified for work outside their normal classrooms get very good support through highly structured schemes. These enable them to make very good progress in their learning. When pupils with special educational needs are taught in their normal classrooms, they get good support in their learning from teachers and classroom assistants. Sometimes, though, teachers do not match work as sharply as they could to pupils' prior attainment and this restricts their learning. The very few pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported to gain language skills and learn with the other pupils.

25. There is very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. These are very well planned and firmly rooted in effective programmes that clearly emphasise family and Christian values. Sex education, drugs awareness and the need for a healthy lifestyle are all delivered through the 'Time to Grow' and 'Family Life' programmes in religious education, science and physical education lessons. These give pupils good skills, knowledge and understanding within a framework of caring and concern for themselves and others.
26. The school forges strong links with its partner schools. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator liaises closely with several nurseries so that information is shared and children settle smoothly into school. There are similar close links with the secondary school with regular meetings and visits to share information and experiences. Pupils sometimes benefit from use of the specialist facilities, as when they took part in a link topic with secondary school specialist teachers or use the swimming pool. During the inspection, older pupils on work experience placements provided valuable support for pupils in their group work.
27. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The headteacher's vision, shared by the staff, is to develop confident, polite pupils, aware of the consequences of their actions. To this end, the arrangements for the pupils' wider education are well planned to have a dramatic influence on pupils' lives from the earliest years in school. Those few pupils with English as an additional language, for example, are quickly and effectively included in all school activities.
28. The provision for spiritual development is very good with strengths in the role models set by the staff. As well as regular teaching about spiritual matters in religious education lessons, the staff plan assembly themes to develop some ideas further. Staff seize opportunities that build on pupils' sense of awe and wonder and amazement at the things they see or hear in lessons, as they arise. For instance, the Year 5 teacher used the children's surprise at the vibrations caused by sounds to teach them important scientific principles. Teachers rightly are anxious to maintain a good pace in their lessons, but this is never at the expense of time for reflection. All teachers ensure that pupils think about what they are saying. The school's acts of collective worship have a sense of specialness. They value pupils as growing young adults and are often a lively celebration of the pupils' learning. They, and many planned activities, put pupils in touch with their inner selves. The staff work hard to create an environment in the display that helps pupils gain a feel for aesthetic quality.
29. The arrangements for pupils' moral development are very good. In lessons, teachers encourage pupils to develop willingness to listen to each other's ideas and openness to opinions different to their own. A typical Year 4 discussion started 'David, Sarah has a different viewpoint, are you willing to let her explain it to us?' Pupils are taught the school and class rules and they demonstrate how the rules operate in the happy and calm atmosphere. Older pupils maintain the positive code of what is right and what is wrong, and show this in their concern for the younger pupils, based on the good model they see presented by the staff. Assembly themes effectively introduce pupils to the impact of moral issues. Lessons too cover moral issues, for instance in geography when Year 5 looked at pollution in local rivers. A particularly important area is the training in telling the truth.

Pupils are taught that mistakes are part of learning and everything is forgivable. A strong programme of personal and social education gives pupils guidance and information at suitable points in their development.

30. Excellent relationships permeate the school. From the first days in the reception class the teachers provide very good social training. This is continued throughout the school, with many opportunities for pupils to work together in harmony, discussing their work and reaching conclusions. Other opportunities encourage pupils to grow well in responsibility and independence. The many jobs the pupils are given enable them to contribute to the smooth running of the daily routines of the school. The young 'secretaries' take their telephone answering duties seriously, anxious to give a good first impression of the school. The staff have very high expectations of the pupils in terms of behaviour; in return they work hard to earn the respect of the pupils. This is what gives the school its distinct ethos of tolerance and good manners. The headteacher sees her role to build up a seven-year relationship with pupils, which involves a close knowledge of the pupils and wise counsel. The opportunities given by the breakfast and after-school clubs show how the school is sensitive to the social needs of the community. Pupils learn generosity by supporting many charities during the school year, often linking the school to the wider global community. The school council is a good training ground for democracy and citizenship. Both of these activities give pupils valuable opportunities to develop initiative.
31. The arrangements to promote the cultural development of pupils are satisfactory overall. Teachers raise pupils' awareness of culture through the curriculum, in art, music, dance, literature and history and geography. The school introduces pupils to some of the different groups in our society, but not to the full range or richness of the cultures now resident in modern Britain, nor to the depth necessary in a multi-cultural society. The staff have drafted a policy to bring cohesion to all the elements of personal education. This will enable the school to track the balance of the factors covered. The action points indicate how the school intends to bring a greater emphasis on areas it has identified for strengthening.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school has good arrangements for making sure that all pupils are well looked after and happy. Parents are right to express their confidence in the questionnaire and in interviews. Pupils are particularly well supervised around school and in the playground. The school provides a breakfast club for the juniors, should they wish to use it, to help them make a good start to the day. All the pupils' first aid and specific medical needs are properly taken care of and they are well looked after if they feel ill. The governors participate in checking the site regularly to make sure it is safe. Child protection procedures are sound, but staff are not sufficiently aware of who the designated member of staff is for them to report to. Nevertheless, all staff have the pupils' best interests at heart and the school provides a happy and secure environment in which they can learn.
33. Pupils' attendance at school is encouraged very well. The school makes good use of its computerised system to identify those pupils whose attendance is lower than it should be. Where necessary the educational social worker visits homes to help sort out problems of attendance or lateness. Parents are good at letting the school know if their children are going to be away, but where they are off school without evident reason the secretary very promptly makes home contact. The school discourages lateness very well by getting pupils to come in by the front office after the start of school. Pupils receive certificates if they have 100 per cent attendance and many do indeed receive these.
34. Behaviour is very well monitored and the school discourages anything that is unacceptable. Staff work very well with parents to support them in helping their children behave well. Parents in turn play their part and where there would be benefit they jointly monitor the

behaviour. Pupils are also encouraged to record feelings about how they have behaved, in a simple fashion. The headteacher carefully keeps records of behaviour incidents, including bullying, should it occur. Lunchtime supervisors have been trained in managing pupils' behaviour and their presence in the playground plays a large part in making playtime a pleasant and sociable experience. Pupils receive class points and house points for good efforts and pupils have been involved in negotiating their own rules in some classes.

35. The school has very good, systematic procedures for recording what pupils can do. It collects data from a wide range of tests from when they enter school to the statutory tests at Year 6. Teachers in the reception classes collect good information of how well children are doing when they enter the school. They use this effectively in matching tasks carefully and consistently to children's developing skills. Teachers through the school regularly check and record what pupils do in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. These assessments are kept in pupils' profiles along with their reports and go with them as they move up the school. Pupils' work in the other subjects is also assessed regularly and this is done consistently throughout the school. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. As an example, what pupils are able to do in physical education is very thoroughly recorded. The use of this extensive information is satisfactory. Despite collecting all this data it is not evaluated sufficiently accurately to find out precisely what pupils need to do in order to improve. Because of this, teachers cannot plan accurately enough to meet their needs. The school does, however, use the data to put pupils into appropriate sets for mathematics and also to identify pupils who would benefit from extra support in reading. The records of pupils with special educational needs identify clearly what pupils need to do to improve. This information is used very well in withdrawal groups, but less effectively in other lessons.
36. Although the school is large, staff know the pupils well and give them very good support in their personal development. Pupils are given individual targets in their work, particularly in the junior classes, such as making sure sentences begin with capitals and end with a full stop. These targets are clearly known to them and help them to learn. Pupils' annual reports to parents meet statutory requirements and tell them clearly how their children are developing in their social skills and behaviour around school. However, the targets set for the pupils in their work in these reports are fairly general. Individual achievements are very well celebrated in weekly 'target assemblies' when teachers in each class put forward the names of pupils who have made a particularly good personal effort in some way.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. The school has maintained the strong links with parents described in the last report. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciative of all that it does for their children. They particularly feel that the school is well managed and led, that it has high expectations of their children and that they would feel comfortable approaching the school with any problems. Parents at the meeting could think of no ways in which the school could be improved, but they would like it to have its own nursery.
38. The information that the school provides for parents is very good. Parents have regular opportunities to talk to teachers to find out about how their children are doing and these include discussing the end of year report if they wish. Meetings are held with parents of children with special educational needs so that they are involved in what the school is doing for their children. The formal information sent out, such as the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, give them plenty of useful information. In spite of this there are a few deficiencies in the prospectus, such as information about what the youngest children are expected to learn when they start. Parents do, however, get very good information through various workshops which the school holds so that they can understand what their children are learning and so can help them at home. Parents are

very pleased with these opportunities and also with the information they get in the regular newsletters. These tell them well about the topics the children are learning about in school each term and suggest useful sites on the Internet that they could use to help them. Parents' annual reports of how well their children are doing are good. They give information of pupils' achievements in subjects and refer to their personal and social development.

39. Parents are very well involved in the life at school. They give very good support ranging from providing transport for sporting activities to helping in lessons such as art, design and technology and with computers. Teachers direct them well so that they make a very useful contribution. Parents value the homework diaries that the Years 5 and 6 pupils use. They use these very well for home/school communication when situations such as not handing in homework arise. Where pupils occasionally need support over behaviour, the parents help to monitor this along with the school in the joint behaviour book. The parents' and friends' association raises money in events. This is used for the benefit of the pupils, for example by providing playground equipment.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. The overall good quality of school leadership and management is the most significant reason why the school has sustained, and in some cases improved on, the strengths identified in the last inspection. The headteacher's very strong leadership reflects her drive in wanting the best for the pupils and her staff. Governors, headteacher and staff work very well as a team to ensure the school meets requirements and is a high quality learning and work environment. Their high level of support, care and concern for one another reflects a commitment to the school and pupils and in large part accounts for the school's success in meeting the aims in its mission statement. Nevertheless, gaps in expertise at all levels of management, especially in the critical evaluation of the work of the school, lessen the impact and effectiveness of action to improve the quality of what is offered and the standards reached.
41. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. It has taken action on all four key issues although aspects, including the development of pupils' independence in their learning, remain as areas for further refinement. Much hard work, led by key staff, has improved the systems and procedures that guide the everyday work of the teachers. For example, the very detailed subject schemes of work, along with the common use of planning and assessment procedures, have provided good consistency in curriculum planning and development. In response to a key issue, governors now take an active role in monitoring the curriculum and occasionally join classes and discuss developments with subject co-ordinators. Similarly, the headteacher and subject co-ordinators regularly monitor curriculum planning and recommend improvements, such as the need to identify the challenge for higher attaining pupils.
42. The headteacher is much respected by governors, parents, staff and pupils, not only for her direction in how things are to be done, but also for her humanity and interest in others. She has a highly visible presence in the school and knows the parents and pupils well. She is quick to praise and also to remind pupils of how to conduct themselves. This sets the tone in maintaining a high level of discipline and in promoting the strong ethos of the school as 'a place where we care' and 'a place of learning'.
43. All support and teaching staff know clearly their roles and responsibilities. The school runs very smoothly because there are well-established, efficient and effective systems to deal with day-to-day organisation and administration. The deputy headteacher plays a key role in overseeing daily routines and in dealing with pastoral matters. The office, cleaning and midday personnel take pride in their work and show much loyalty to the school. Their good

relationships, open communication and shared involvement in running the school well justify the award of Investors in People since the last inspection.

44. The school's continuing commitment to the training of all is evident in the development of courses for parents and in the programme for teachers and support staff. Good use is made of expertise within the school as well as from other agencies, including the diocese and the local education authority, as part of the action to meet school development priorities and also individual professional needs. This has been a key factor in the good development of subject co-ordinators' skills and the heightening of teachers' awareness in how to implement national guidance on, for example, the Foundation Stage and the development of teaching in literacy and mathematics. In turn, this has contributed to higher standards in some aspects and raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. A good example is in mathematics where school and test evidence shows a trend of improvement.
45. The school is making effective use of the process of managing the teachers' performance to raise standards in agreed curriculum areas and meet the school's targets. Running alongside this, and meshing well, is a programme of support and monitoring by co-ordinators of their subjects. Although there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest otherwise, formal records indicate a lack of critical edge in monitoring, especially in identifying explicit points for action related to the development of aspects of teaching and learning. Given points often refer only to the curriculum and resources. This may be one reason why the school has not been successful in meeting its realistic target of sustaining the English standards achieved in 2001. Marked differences in pupils' progress between classes in some year groups point to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and, in turn, to gaps in the process to identify exactly what needs to be done and how it may best be achieved.
46. The school's efficient systems to track pupils' progress through looking at their work and test results give a sound overview of value added in year groups and also of developing trends. The school compares itself with others locally and nationally and governors receive a breakdown of the school's results in the annual national tests. However, not enough is done to analyse the results rigorously and to use the information to identify where specific curriculum changes are needed and also where support in teaching and learning would be best placed. Co-ordinators talk in general terms rather than show a detailed understanding of where problems lie and what is needed to deal with them. Nevertheless, work already done, particularly in literacy, mathematics and science, sets a good model and indicates good potential for further improvement.
47. The lack of sharpness and specificity of purpose is reflected in the content of the otherwise detailed school development plan. An improvement in the plan since the last inspection is the inclusion of an overview to the year 2007 setting out key intentions and areas for review and maintenance. A key item is the governors' intention to create and improve access to the school for the disabled. As in the last inspection, a strength of the school is the use of the plan-do-review system to look at each subject. It uses the system for key areas including buildings and management, and to draw up the priorities for the next development plan. This involves all members of staff as well as governors and pupils through the school council.
48. The plan is a useful working record of what is to be done to deal with relevant priorities and ensures that governors and staff have a clear picture of the intended direction for the school and their role in the process. However, the plan does not specify clearly intended measurable outcomes and targets. Some are given as success criteria, as in the current mathematics plan, but this is not consistent. This, together with the absence of costs for some actions, makes it difficult for governors and key staff to evaluate critically the effectiveness of what has been done and to understand thoroughly the strengths and

weaknesses of the school. There is little in the minutes of meetings to indicate that governors consider best value for money in the action taken and compare costs with those of other schools.

49. Financial management is good. The school receives roughly the same amount for each pupil as most primaries and the headteacher is careful in her checking of the school's spending. The deficit shown in Part C of this report was because the school had not received grant monies due to it by the end of the last financial year. The decision by governors to increase the spending on support staff this year has given good quality provision for pupils with special educational needs in line with school priorities. The governors have planned a small under-spend to boost school reserve funds. The headteacher is conscious of the need to review spending and to make some savings given projected lower funding in the years ahead. She and the governors actively seek value for money in goods and services and seek other funding, such as monies from Excellence in Cities to employ a learning mentor. Grants are used as appropriate, such as improvements to the buildings and the provision of booster classes for Year 6 pupils. Staff have benefited from funding to upgrade their information and communication technology skills and have been using their developing expertise not only in teaching pupils but also in producing curriculum documents, worksheets and support materials. The school also makes good use of information and communication technology as part of administrative procedures, such as attendance and the compilation of the annual reports to parents.
50. The school has well qualified staff equipped to cover the full range of subjects. They are well supported by an adequate number of classroom assistants. Several changes in teaching staff since the last inspection, and more especially during the current school year, have been well managed by governors and key staff to provide minimal disruption to the pupils' learning. For example, much has been done to support and guide inexperienced staff and those new to the school, while the teaching of the deputy headteacher has ensured stability for pupils in a Year 1 class. The arrangements made for others to take this class have allowed him to lead workshops for parents as outlined in the school development plan.
51. Resources in the school are very good. A good range of quality fiction and non-fiction books are distributed throughout classrooms. All subject areas are well supplied with relevant materials and there are no deficiencies. There are sufficient computers in classrooms and in the information and communication technology area for all pupils to use.
52. The accommodation that the school has is good and is very well maintained. Classrooms are bright and spacious with attractive displays. Although there is no field, the school makes good use of its playgrounds. It also uses the swimming pool at the nearby secondary school. Since the last inspection, the school has built an area to house a library. However, this is not big enough to form a central resource area that older pupils can use independently. Instead it is mainly used as an additional teaching area for pupils with special educational needs and the need for a library continues.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

53. The school has made satisfactory progress in remedying the weaknesses identified in the last report. In order to build on this work and to ensure more uniform progress for all pupils through the school, the headteacher, governors and staff should now:

- (1) improve the collection and use of detailed information of what pupils know, understand and can do
 - to plan lessons to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities,
 - to define school priorities carefully and the action to be taken;(paragraphs 17-18, 35, 46, 65, 73-74, 77-78, 85)
- (2) improve the consistency of teaching through the school by using information from monitoring more critically to share good teaching methods and identify clearly where teaching needs to be improved.
(paragraphs 3-6, 14, 24, 40, 45-46, 63, 71, 74, 82, 84, 91, 107, 115)

The following less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

continue to promote pupils' independence in their learning through greater opportunities for them to make choices and plan their own work.
(paragraphs 20, 41, 68, 94, 99, 101, 106)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	71
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	1	10	26	32	2	0	0
Percentage	1	14	37	45	3	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	413
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	115

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	104

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	25	27	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	17	15	20
	Girls	26	24	23
	Total	43	39	43
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	83 (96)	75 (95)	83 (96)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	16	20	20
	Girls	27	25	27
	Total	43	45	47
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	83 (96)	87 (95)	90 (93)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	26	30	56

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	19	14	22
	Girls	26	22	29
	Total	45	36	51
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	80 (72)	64 (65)	91 (89)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	18	15	21
	Girls	25	21	27
	Total	43	36	48
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	77 (69)	64 (66)	86 (86)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	344
Any other minority ethnic group	12

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.9
Average class size	29.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	230

FTE means full-time equivalent

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	848,982
Total expenditure	850,368
Expenditure per pupil	2,085
Balance brought forward from previous year	-7,140
Balance carried forward to next year	-8,526

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate: 47%

Number of questionnaires sent out	413
Number of questionnaires returned	194

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	29	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	36	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	32	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	53	43	3	1	0
The teaching is good.	73	27	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	36	4	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	19	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	19	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	62	37	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	80	20	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	27	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	32	8	3	8

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

54. Children start in the reception year at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. Their attainment on entry covers a wide range, but is broadly average overall. They make good progress in the reception classes because of the good teaching that takes account of their different needs. Most children reach the goals for their age in each of the areas of learning and sometimes exceed them in communication, language and literacy and personal and social development. This is because teachers make a thorough assessment of what children can do and need to work on next. They use this well to pitch work at suitably challenging levels for the range of abilities in their classes. There is strong teamwork by all the adults working in both classes. They have high expectations of their children, but also carefully target extra support for those children who find learning hard so that they, too, make good progress.
55. The strengths in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage have been maintained since the previous inspection. The teaching and planning have improved considerably. Teachers now plan closely to the national guidance, providing a very good range of interesting experiences that cover all the areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. Provision for outdoor play, a weakness at the previous inspection, is improving. Children now have regular opportunities to extend their physical development in planned sessions outdoors.

Personal, social and emotional development

56. Good teaching in this area of learning means that children, whatever their backgrounds, soon become confident and independent. The very good routines and clear expectations of behaviour create a calm and purposeful atmosphere where children behave very well and work happily together. This was evident when a group of busy children sang as they drew pictures together, and others patiently waited their turn in a number game. Teachers successfully encourage children's growing awareness of their responsibility to others and their environment so that they eagerly undertake such jobs as taking the register to the office. At the end of sessions, they are very quick and helpful in tidying away toys and equipment. They co-operate very well, for instance when working with a partner to fold a large piece of fabric carefully. In both classrooms the attractive displays, very good range of resources and interesting activities mean that children are eager to learn. This, together with effective teaching, provides a good springboard for their school lives.

Communication, language and literacy

57. This is another area where adults have high expectations of what the children can achieve. The good, sometimes very good, teaching is a strength in moving children forward in their communication, language and literacy skills. Teachers take every opportunity to encourage children to practise and improve their skills. When children were telling their news, the teacher's questions stimulated fuller explanations. For example, 'How does that work?' led one child into a detailed explanation of how a 'whoopie cushion' works. Most children speak clearly and some are articulate speakers by the time they start in Year 1. There is a good emphasis on developing early literacy skills through all the activities on offer so that progress is sometimes very good, and children have good 'can do' attitudes to reading and writing independently. In a reading session with a group of children, the teacher knew which skills this group of children needed to move them forward. A well-chosen book and her carefully phrased questions meant that they read accurately, recognised question, exclamation and speech marks and developed a good understanding of the story line. The school uses adult helpers well so that children benefit from working

individually or in small groups. Children struggling to read knew the sounds of many letters after a classroom assistant played an alphabet game with them. Parents support their children well by reading regularly with them at home. Children's interest and enjoyment in reading are further boosted by shared reading sessions with pupils in Year 6.

58. Teachers use writing well so that children see the purpose of it. A good example was when a teacher wrote out the recipe for a banana drink and then encouraged children to use it as a checklist. Children have a sharp eye for correctness, as seen when a boy noticed a mistake. 'There is something wrong; you need a capital letter after a full stop', he said. Good knowledge of letter sounds means that they spell some words correctly and make good attempts at others as they write increasingly independently. Some more able children write extended stories based on the books they read together, such as *Elmer*. These are well sequenced, correctly punctuated and neatly written. Their writing improves rapidly and they exceed the goals set for their age because teachers set them targets that show them what to work on next.

Mathematical development

59. Children enjoy their mathematics activities because good teaching means that they are fun. The successful use of stories, number songs and games and other good quality resources is a strength in the teaching. Parents provide a useful boost by playing number games at home following a mathematics workshop session that raised awareness of early mathematics experiences in school. Children learned to read the time in hours when a clock was used to show the different times in a 'What Time is it, Mr Wolf?' story. There are plenty of opportunities for children to practise their counting skills, so that they count quickly and accurately to ten. Teachers make sure that they understand what they are to do. For example, when children were counting 'one more than' the teacher checked their understanding and counting skills by challenging them to show their answers on white boards. There is a good emphasis on teaching children the vocabulary that is new to each topic. As a result, they confidently use words like *cube*, *cuboid* and *cylinder* to describe solid shapes. Two more able children worked furiously to write as many numbers as they could, reaching 36 correctly before the sand ran out in the sand timer. This, and some of the teacher-led group work, challenged them well. However, when these children are set similar tasks to others in on-going activities or recording their work, they sometimes do not move forward as much as they might. Whilst children reach the goals in their mathematical development, the brightest do not reach the same high levels as they do in their literacy development.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

60. The teaching is good and so the children find the activities stimulating and enjoyable. The teacher's questions as children decided how to make a healthy drink to take on a 'teddy bears' picnic' gave them a keen awareness of healthy foods and the need for good hygiene in food preparation. When she asked, 'How can we make our drinks smooth?' a useful discussion helped children appreciate how a sieve works. Teachers make good use of a wide range of well-prepared resources. For instance, a collection of toy animals stimulated a lively discussion when a group of children were playing together. They identified animals like the killer whale by name. They pointed out some of their distinctive features, such as the tiger's whiskers, the zebra's stripes and the lion's sharp teeth. They were beginning to sort the animals into different types. For instance, one child explained that he needed the lion because he was collecting the 'dangerous animals'. Children work co-operatively to create houses and other structures using the construction toys. They are confident and accurate when operating the mouse to select colours to complete 'Joseph's coat' or 'Baa, baa, blue sheep' pictures on the computer. First hand experiences, like a nature walk, play an important part in widening their knowledge of nature and their environment. Children

confidently reach the goals set for their age in their knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the reception year.

Physical development

61. Planning for this area has improved recently and the teaching is now good. The teachers organise and manage children very well. When children change for physical activities, they need little help and are soon ready to start. They listen very carefully when the teacher is speaking and quickly follow instructions so that no time is wasted. This stood them in good stead when they were using the large climbing apparatus in the hall. They were safe and controlled in their movements because they understood the rules and the need for safety. For instance, no one climbed higher than the yellow ribbons on the ladders because 'we might fall off'. A mixture of demonstration and clear instructions meant that children jumped and landed safely, showing good imagination in their use of 'star' and 'tall' body shapes. Outdoor play activities are carefully planned so that children run and move around using space carefully. They gain confidence in riding a suitable range of wheeled toys and crawling over and through equipment like a tunnel. Their skills in handling paintbrushes, construction toys and scissors and moulding materials develop well because of the range of opportunities provide in these sessions. The facilities are still limited, as the outdoor area is part of the main playground used by older pupils. This means that resources have to be set out and packed away for playtimes and other activities in the playground. Nevertheless, teachers make good use of what they have, so that children make good progress and reach the goals in their physical development.

Creative development

62. The teaching in this area is satisfactory. Children enjoy singing and they have a good repertoire of well-known songs that they sing tunefully, remembering the words well. They have plenty of opportunities to draw and paint so that their figures become more detailed and interesting during the reception year. Good examples are the paintings of the 'Good Samaritan' and their pets that show good observational skills in their sense of movement and detailed facial features. Children eagerly made animal masks, taking great care in cutting out the shape and painting them. However, they lacked imagination and curiosity in experimenting with the interesting range of wool, fabric and other materials set out by the teacher. Their masks were all similarly painted and not as exciting as they might have been. Children needed more encouragement to experiment and find ways of using these new materials creatively. More emphasis is needed to developing children's skills in role-play. The *Vet's Surgery* and a very good stock of hand puppets provide a valuable stimulus for children to act out their own stories. Children do not show as much interest or imagination in these activities as they might. They respond better when adults play alongside, as seen when children took on the roles of the 'Three Little Pigs' using puppets in their play prompted by a classroom assistant. Whilst children make satisfactory progress and generally reach the goals in their creative development, they are not as imaginative as they might be.

ENGLISH

63. Standards are below average at the end of Year 2 and average at the end of Year 6. Standards are not as high as at the time of the last inspection and the school has not met its targets for this year. However, this masks a complex picture. Good teaching overall ensures all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, learn well the basic skills of reading and writing. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, which varies from very good to unsatisfactory, mean there are significant differences in the rate of pupils' learning and their attainment. In the two classes of Years 2 and 6 pupils, one class has done significantly better than the other. While this partly reflects differences in the pupils' attainment profile, it also reflects differences in the quality of the teaching and the underachievement of many pupils, especially in Year 2.
64. Standards are better in reading than in writing, but there is a rising but inconsistent trend of improvement in writing through the school. Three key factors explain this improvement. Firstly, writing has been a school development priority. Structured, systematic teaching in how to organise writing, as well as in spelling, handwriting, punctuation and grammar, is paying off in pupils' good level of enjoyment, confidence and competence in writing. Secondly, writing has been linked effectively to work in other subjects giving the pupils a realistic purpose and reason for writing. Good examples are the writing of thank you letters when pupils have been on educational visits and the production of information booklets on 'Penguins' by Year 2 pupils alongside work in art and design. Thirdly, the setting of targets and the frequent use of key phrases to structure the pupils' writing have particularly helped the average and lower attaining pupils to realise what they need to do and how to do it. As a result, most pupils are working at the level expected for their age.
65. In the younger infant classes, pupils' good attainment indicates the potential for standards to rise. The seeds of this are also evident in the very good standards of one Year 2 class where two-thirds of pupils are writing at, or above, the level expected for their age. In the junior classes, there is a similar trend of improvement this year. Compared with last year, a higher percentage of Year 6 pupils have done better than expected for their age. However, there is evidence to indicate that the teachers often over-estimate what pupils can do. This means that pupils do not always get the precise help they need to improve and reach their potential. While pupils do well when prompted by adults, many find it hard to remember and apply relevant strategies and knowledge when working on their own. Even in Year 6, many pupils make errors in spelling and punctuation even though they know the rules and conventions.
66. As in the last inspection, one area of common strength is the high quality of the presentation of pupils' work. Pupils are expected to present their work neatly. The teachers provide good models in their attractive, orderly displays of pupils' work and in their compilation of worksheets, guidance cards and target reminders. Teachers teach handwriting well and pupils regularly practise how to form and join letters so that most are using a well-formed, legible style by the time they are in Year 6.
67. Pupils' listening and speaking skills are satisfactory. The staff place high emphasis on the pupils giving full attention when listening to adults and other pupils. The pupils generally listen attentively and the effective use of talk partners during class sessions allows pupils to sort out their ideas. Most pupils converse easily with each other and with adults. Many Year 2 pupils show good skills in describing and explaining what they do, and Year 6 pupils usually give detailed accounts of their views and opinions. Not all are so articulate in justifying and explaining things clearly and convincingly. This weakens the quality of their reading and writing across the curriculum and particularly in science. Teachers often miss chances to ask the pupils to expand their responses or to explain their thinking. In preparation for a debate on whether pupils should wear school uniform, Year 4 pupils

expressed their ideas clearly and many used apt phrases such as, 'If... then...'. However, their teacher did not prompt them to say more or to question the views of others. The pupils show a developing awareness of Standard English. While Year 6 pupils discussed slang words for 'money', Year 2 pupils congratulated themselves on stopping using the term 'we brang' in writing as they knew it was incorrect.

68. Good teaching ensures that most pupils learn to read quickly and attain the level expected for their age. Higher attaining pupils do well in all year groups. The pupils enjoy reading and most willingly take books home. The school has recently changed the reading scheme to appeal more to the younger pupils and has a good range and number of books of different types for boys and girls. For example, Year 6 pupils can choose from a wide range of children's classics as well as current authors such as J K Rowling and Jacqueline Wilson. The daily periods of independent reading, as well as reading times in lessons, foster well the pupils' awareness of authors and book types. However, few classrooms have attractive reading areas or provision for pupils to find what they need from non-fiction texts. The school library is most often used as a teaching space. Most pupils gain little experience of using it to carry out research. Similarly, in lessons, few teachers used the classroom computers or other equipment to develop the pupils' reading.
69. The younger pupils listen appreciatively and look avidly at the pictures when introduced to new texts. Year 2 pupils were bitterly disappointed when the teacher stopped their play reading at the end of a scene. They were totally absorbed in reading the line for different characters and in perfecting how to say 'g - g - g - ghosts'. Very good teaching by the literacy co-ordinator helped them to link what they had done previously and to see the pattern emerging in the story. They read with very good expression, fluency and accuracy. When reading aloud, they often correct their own errors and show a good understanding of the storyline. This is even more pronounced as the pupils get older. Year 5 pupils have definite reading preferences, such as non-fiction or entertaining stories, and use the text well to predict what comes next. By Year 6, pupils are confident readers who draw on their own experience to empathise with characters and appreciate how authors build up tension, as in the first chapter of *Stig of the Dump*. They skim to get the gist of a passage, scan to find words and phrases and confidently refer to captions, diagrams and blocks of print when reading non-fiction texts.
70. The school makes good efforts to ensure that it makes provision for all pupils. In line with schools nationally, Holy Souls has invested much time and money in providing additional support for those infant and junior pupils who do not make fast enough progress in reading and writing. Good examples are the structured programme of reading enrichment for Year 1 pupils and the support from teachers and classroom assistants for pupils with special educational needs in literacy. In one session seen, Year 2 pupils made good progress in writing their own stories because the teacher made effective use of time, place and character cards to help the pupils plan their first sentence. They found the task fun and were keen to write more. Some lessons where pupils are withdrawn are carefully pitched to make very good demands on the pupils involved. As a result, many show very good rates of progress and confidence in English. The very few pupils with English as an additional language are well supported in this way and soon have no problems when working in their normal classes. The withdrawal of pupils from the classroom sometimes means that the class teachers are not benefiting from seeing the good practice of the support staff.
71. Although the overall quality of teaching is good, and has several strengths, there are also key inconsistencies that are hindering the move to raise standards. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and use appropriate technical terms when talking about language. However, not all are equally skilled in drawing out the features and explaining clearly different aspects, such as an author's style or imagery in poetry. By planning lessons together, teachers ensure that pupils in the same year group experience similar content.

They are helped by the very detailed medium term plans, lists of learning targets and good bank of resources for teachers and pupils. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching varies considerably. In the better lessons, the teachers work with the pupils to identify explicitly what they need to know and do. For example, the teacher's questioning helped Year 5 pupils to see that a persuasive letter is likely to include a lot of positively stated language. In less effective lessons, the teachers often assume the pupils know and understand key points and strategies.

72. The teachers follow the guidance of the National Literacy Strategy in structuring the daily literacy hour and its content. The teachers share the purpose of the lesson with the pupils and often refer to it at key times as well as at the end. In many class sessions seen, the teachers made good use of small white boards to encourage the pupils to try out their spellings or to record their ideas. In contrast, the pupils completed worksheets or wrote in their books during the independent activities and did not always finish the work in the time. Teachers are often too concerned with quiet working, rather than with activities that promote effective learning. They have produced useful guidance cards for pupils, but few classrooms have prominent displays of reminders for pupils about what they have learnt in reading and writing. A notable exception is the advice on 'How to write a really good story' in a Year 4 classroom.
73. Teachers' marking is very variable. While there are some very good examples of teachers commenting on the quality of the work, such as 'I really liked the way you ...' and also points for improvement, this is not consistent throughout the school. Teachers' handwriting is not always the best model for pupils, especially when there is inaccurate punctuation. All the teachers keep records of the pupils' progress in relation to specific learning targets. However, they do not all use the information on what pupils cannot do and need to do next to inform their planning.
74. The good leadership and management skills and the enthusiasm of the co-ordinator are key factors in why the English curriculum is so well structured and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. She provides a very good model of teaching and from her monitoring has a good understanding of where improvements are needed. However, the lack of analysis of pupils' strengths and weaknesses in tests means that the focus for improvement is too general. Her work to structure guided reading sessions has much improved the quality of reading teaching and sets a good precedent for further improvements.

MATHEMATICS

75. Standards in mathematics are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Although this is broadly the same as findings of the last inspection, it is higher than the 2001 national tests, particularly by the end of Year 2. The school has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers have a more effective framework for planning and secure subject knowledge. Overall, teaching and learning are good and this is beginning to raise standards. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent and this affects the rate of learning for some pupils.
76. Through using the framework of the numeracy strategy, teachers now begin their lessons with effective mental or oral sessions. This keeps pupils alert, develops mental agility and engages their attention. As a result, the standards in mental mathematics are improving along with pupils' ability to explain their strategies for working out their answers. Teachers' analyses of school and national test results revealed that there was too little emphasis on problem solving. Teachers now ensure that they include tasks to develop these skills and all pupils are becoming increasingly aware of the steps and calculations involved. However, a number of pupils still struggle to organise their ideas logically, particularly Year

- 6, because they have not had the opportunities to extend these skills throughout the school.
77. By the end of Year 2, pupils add and subtract two-digit numbers, they double and halve numbers and know that subtraction is the inverse of addition. They understand place value of numbers to sequence numbers to 100 and round numbers to the nearest 10 correctly. Pupils make block graphs to show their birthdays and begin to weigh using grammes. Higher attaining pupils begin to multiply by 2, 3, 4 and 5, but are not always sure how to write money, using decimals. This is because some brighter pupils begin work at the same level as other pupils in their class and have insufficient opportunities to reach higher levels of attainment. More pupils achieve higher standards in one class than the other because of the inconsistencies of teaching. When teachers use the information from lessons and half-termly tests to plan, work matches more closely to pupils' abilities and standards are higher.
78. In the junior classes, teachers set pupils in groups for mathematics across Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6. This enables teachers to plan work that more closely matches pupils' abilities at different levels. The support for pupils with special educational needs is good and enables them to make good progress. Regular mental arithmetic tests and half-termly tests provide detailed information to enable teachers to plan the next steps of learning. However, not all teachers use this information as effectively as they could. They plan work based on the National Numeracy Strategy and do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. By the end of Year 6, pupils understand place value to multiply and divide by 10 and 100. They use the appropriate number operation to solve problems and check their results, with or without a calculator. They find fractions of numbers and begin to recognise the relationship between fractions and percentages. Pupils find area by counting squares and draw shapes to show rotational symmetry. Secure teaching for the brighter pupils and some average pupils ensures that most pupils reach their appropriate levels. However, marking does not always indicate how they can improve and this is a weakness.
79. Teaching and learning are good overall with very good teaching in one class in Year 2 and one group in Year 6. Thorough planning provides a structure to lessons. Teachers introduce lessons by sharing the learning intentions for the lesson and explaining new learning clearly. This sets the expectations for the lesson and enables pupils to understand what they are to learn. Teachers use and explain new vocabulary well so pupils use and understand it themselves. For example, Year 3 pupils use the word *horizontal* when learning about block graphs. Teachers reinforce mathematical language by asking pupils to give alternatives for add and subtract, for example. The good use of resources, such as white boards, number squares, or a metre ruler marked in threes and fives, provide a scaffold for pupils' learning and enhance understanding well. They help to illustrate teachers' examples to clarify understanding and motivate learning.
80. Skilful questioning helps to extend pupils' answers and encourages them to think. It provides opportunities for pupils to share what they know or explain their mathematical strategies. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher asked, 'What does the word *minimum* mean?' The correct answer given by a pupil helped all the class to understand the numeracy problem they were reading. Classroom assistants ensure that all pupils have full access to all parts of the lessons. They provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and enable them to take a full part in lessons by encouraging them to offer their answers and to improve their understanding.
81. A strong feature of all lessons is the very good relationship teachers have with their pupils. This encourages pupils to work hard and gives them confidence to try their best. It enables pupils to answer or ask questions with confidence because teachers accept and respect pupils' contributions in lessons. Teachers use praise well and effectively organise and

manage pupils. Consequently, pupils behave very well and show enthusiasm for their lessons. In the best lessons, teachers give pupils opportunities to talk about their ideas. This enables them to discuss numeracy problems and suggest ways of solving them. A brisk pace in lessons, particularly in introductory sessions, encourages pupils to think and answer rapidly. However, occasionally teachers give lengthy introductions and keep pupils sitting inactive too long. Pupils lose concentration and learning slows.

82. The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory. Thorough analysis of the results of school and national tests provides detailed information for teachers to support their planning. Monitoring of teaching helps identify some strengths and weaknesses in teaching. However, weaknesses in the use of assessments were not identified. Evaluations that are more thorough are needed to identify weaknesses and remedy them through sharing good teaching with others.

SCIENCE

83. The school has enjoyed a rising trend of achievement in the National Curriculum tests. Standards by the end of the present Year 2 and 6 are average. The adoption of a new planning scheme, based on national guidelines, has strengthened teachers' planning since the previous inspection. Each year group now has targets for the pupils to reach by the end of the year. This enables each year to contribute to the progress of the next in a structured way. The staff compile information of pupils' attainment in tests at the end of every topic. This data builds up into a secure system to alert teachers if a pupil is not making appropriate progress for their ability. It is a strong system, but at present is not used as quickly or effectively as it could be. The headteacher and co-ordinator analyse the pupils' test answers to show areas of difficulty to focus on in the following year, and to identify groups of pupils who need extra support. This, together with the additional support for pupils who have special educational needs, means that the school is meeting its aim to bring out the best in pupils of all levels of ability. The matching of work to pupils' ability is also an improvement since the previous inspection.
84. Teaching is good throughout the school although it ranges from satisfactory to very good. In several year groups teaching is better in one class than in another, so that pupils' progress is not equal across those year groups. Teaching has been monitored and the school has taken action to adjust the imbalances, but it still needs to do more. Some of the monitoring sheets do not specify exactly what is missing in a lesson so that the teacher can act on the advice.
85. In the best teaching, the teachers make relevant use of the assessment information so that the work is pitched at just the right level, challenging the brightest pupils and supporting the weakest. In the weaker teaching, the teachers assess the capabilities of many pupils too highly. With the work pitched at the wrong level, the pupils' interest falters and their understanding is not as clear. In the best lessons, teachers concentrate on the basic skills of setting up an experiment in a very structured way. They repeat the key messages frequently in different ways. By the end of such lessons, pupils are in no doubt about what they have learned. The teachers' clear objectives, which they have shared with the pupils at the start of the lesson, are realised. All pupils like this system and the less able pupils feel particularly supported and know what they are doing. More able pupils are free to think ahead and around the experiment. When the time comes to discuss their findings, all pupils have experienced success and can contribute to the debate drawing on their relevant experiences.
86. The very practical nature of the work that teachers plan helps to maintain pupils' sense of curiosity. The teacher of a Year 2 class, for example, carefully reminded the pupils how their experiment about friction and cars moving on different surfaces linked to the previous work that they had done. Then the pupils were free to organise the second half of the test

using what they knew about fair testing. They shared their ideas sensibly. A Year 4 class engaged in a very polite discussion about the nature of electric circuits. They knew about analogies and explored many ideas, including the human body as a circuit, or a battery going flat being like water going down a plughole. A Year 6 class was at a high enough standard for the teacher to move on from basic ideas of fair testing of different materials, to looking for patterns in the data that pupils collect. The pupils' progress in all of these good, practical, learning situations was strengthened by the quality of the discussions afterwards. Not all the older pupils, however, know the nature of the levels they are achieving and do not evaluate their own work.

87. Teachers encourage the pupils to look at science as questions. This promotes their ability to think clearly and solve problems. The very good relationships that teachers develop mean that pupils are interested and able to learn in calm classroom conditions. Not all the teachers have good subject knowledge to enable them to give clear explanations that guide pupils to reach accurate conclusions. Some teachers use computers effectively for making scientific measurements and for presenting them. For instance, the Year 5 pupils were able to study the shape of the sound waves of their voices, which convinced them that sound must be some form of vibration. This level of relevance is not consistent in every year. The annual science weeks are popular with pupils, staff and parents. The co-ordinator has introduced these since the previous inspection. They are a valuable way to promote enthusiasm for science all round. The planned improvement is to use more activities based on pupils' own questions, promoting greater independence in pupils' work.

ART AND DESIGN

88. Standards in art and design are above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Although there were no art lessons seen, from talking with teachers and pupils and scrutiny of their work, artwork has a high profile in the school and is of good quality. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, including teaching three-dimensional work, through effective training organised by the co-ordinator. Pupils' standards in three-dimensional art and sculpture are high. This is better than at the time of the last inspection.
89. All pupils experience a good range of materials, techniques and art from different cultures and artists. Teachers make good links to other subjects so that when pupils learn about Mexico in Year 2, for example, they make clay masks based on Mexican artefacts. Art supports effective learning in other subjects because teachers systematically plan to develop this. For instance, pupils used mathematical shapes to make face pictures in Year 5 and they drew Celtic figures to illustrate a history display in Year 3. Pupils learn new techniques through effective teaching of new skills and by observing paintings and drawings by famous artists. They have opportunities to explore and practise them, but do not use sketchbooks to record their ideas or show their progress. This limits the range of ideas that they consider and restricts their individual choices.
90. Pupils benefit from working with visiting artists or visiting art galleries, particularly Year 6. They learn to appreciate and evaluate the work of others and relate it to their own work. Pupils learn the process used when working with clay. By the end of Year 6, pupils describe and use the process to make clay heads. They use magazine paper to create a layered collage and pencil, crayon and paint to create landscapes, using different techniques. Their work shows imagination and extreme care with finish. Homework gives pupils opportunities to investigate the work of different artists and to design work on that style. However, opportunities to explore their own ideas or express their feelings through art are more limited.
91. Leadership and management of art and design are sound. Good guidance linked to good resources support teachers well. The co-ordinator is aware of strengths and weaknesses

through collecting pupils' work and looking at displays. She does not monitor or evaluate teaching and this limits her view of what the school needs to do next.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. Pupils attain average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However, their skills when making and finishing their products are good and higher than their skills in designing and planning. Effective training for teachers and detailed planning guidance provided by the co-ordinator help to ensure teachers have secure subject knowledge and teach construction skills particularly well. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. These are improvements since the last inspection and the school has successfully addressed the issues in the last report.
93. Pupils experience a broad range of materials, tools and techniques as they move through the school. They work with card, wood, textiles and food. They use a range of moving mechanisms and work with increasing accuracy. Progress with pupils' making skills is good. By the end of Year 2, pupils measure and saw wood accurately, join it to make a frame, strengthening the corners, and add axles and wheels to make a lorry. They follow simple recipes, with guidance, to make biscuits and decorate them with care.
94. In the juniors, pupils use winding mechanisms, build Tudor houses and in Year 6 use a camshaft and crank handle in a child's toy. Teachers make good links to other subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils make a modern day *shaduf* when they study the Ancient Egyptians in history. Year 5 pupils investigate Greek food when learning about the Ancient Greeks. By the end of Year 6, pupils use and explain the mechanisms they use, measure and join wood accurately to make a cube and use ideas from interviews with younger children to generate their designs. However, every pupil makes a similar toy, the only differences being the design of the moving head and the finish on the box. This restricts pupils' creativity, particularly in the planning and designing process. Pupils understand the need to collect information, design their ideas and plan their work. They make detailed models of the heads they are to use on their toys and produce a high quality, well-finished product.
95. Teachers plan lessons effectively because they use the school's guidance. This ensures pupils develop skills well as they move through the school. Good organisation of resources, classroom assistants and adult volunteers enables small groups of pupils to experience the full range of materials, tools and techniques. Teachers explain and demonstrate new learning well so pupils know what to do. Effective questioning focuses pupils' learning and encourages them to consider different options; for instance, where to place the winding mechanisms and thread carriers on the *shaduf* models. Very good relationships with pupils encourage them to work hard, persevere when tasks are difficult and to collaborate. Pupils want to do their best because they want to please their teachers. Good reminders of safety, and hygiene when appropriate, create a safe working environment where pupils are aware of the dangers of mishandling tools and materials.
96. Leadership and management of design and technology are good. The co-ordinator has a secure view of standards in design and technology through monitoring teaching, evaluating samples of work and talking to staff and pupils. There are plans to adapt the planning systems to make further improvements. The current guidance for design and technology is thorough and all staff follow it carefully. However, although pupils learn the full range of designing and making skills, they do not have opportunities to apply these skills to more open-ended design briefs. This limits their opportunities to develop design and planning skills or to choose resources or construction methods for themselves.

GEOGRAPHY

97. Standards are above the expected level for the pupils' ages by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and pupils make good progress through the school. Provision for geography has improved since the previous inspection. The new structured planning scheme enables teachers to plan more consistently throughout the school. The teachers make good use of time in literacy lessons to extend the types of writing that pupils can apply in geography work. As a result, Year 6 pupils construct convincing reports evaluating the facilities in Brindley Place as a tourist attraction. They demonstrate well the skills they have built up through the years. The staff carefully monitor the coverage of the required elements of the curriculum. At the end of each topic they assess pupils' progress to ensure that they are moving towards the targets set for each year group to achieve. This pressure to move forward is mostly responsible for the higher standards and good progress. Teachers could make more of numeracy time to introduce those geographical skills that have a mathematical base.
98. Teaching is good. By their thoughtful questioning, teachers are careful to include all pupils in the class discussions. This encourages pupils with special educational needs well. They develop as positive an attitude as their peers. They relate well to their classroom assistants and work hard for them. All pupils show their pride in their work by neat presentation. The teachers take care to display the pupils' work well, and often referred to this in lessons. Computers are becoming increasingly well used as a source of information. For instance, Year 5 pupils enjoyed putting in postcodes of local areas and seeing the map quickly appear on screen. This reinforced their mapping skills because they had also studied the landscape features in photographs, from several angles.
99. At present, teachers guide most of the investigations and pupils do not independently select their own geographical questions to study in the earlier years. By Year 6, however, pupils can plan their own research projects. Though pupils write well, they are reluctant to use geographical style and vocabulary in their speech. Teachers do not do enough to ensure that pupils use and apply their growing technical vocabulary.
100. The subject management is good. The subject co-ordinator has undertaken a valuable review of the subject. This has highlighted the need to build on the teachers' good subject knowledge by selecting topics that fit their particular interest and expertise. She is considering extending the assessments of pupils' attainment into a formal portfolio of assessed work. This would involve pupils undertaking part of the evaluation of their own work.

HISTORY

101. Standards are in line with the average expected for the pupils' age by the end of Years 2 and 6. Infant and junior pupils make good progress. The school has improved the planning scheme since the previous inspection, so that skills are now taught in a consistent form through the school. The balance that was missing at the time of the previous inspection is now evident in teachers' planning. Pupils gain knowledge and skills in small steps year by year. They have regular opportunities to develop and use their literacy skills, for example, when finding out information from books. They present their written work neatly because they have a positive attitude to history and learning in general. The teachers use an imaginative range of methods to develop interest and enthusiasm in history. For instance, the Year 2 teacher had packed her bags with items that engaged pupils' curiosity, but which also made them think. As a result, the pupils gained a deeper understanding of what it meant to the people on the Mayflower to leave home. Some of the best work of the older pupils is when they write about the motives of the people involved in the events. Pupils discuss well in groups or as a whole class, but they do not yet independently set out their own agenda for investigation.

102. The quality of teaching is good. The good quality displays indicate that teaching is consistently good throughout the year and the school and pupils draw on their art skills to support history work. Teachers encourage the pupils to handle exhibits and learn to use their reasoning powers to predict the likely purpose of the objects. Teachers use questions well to draw out pupils' ideas. By phrasing the questions at different levels the teachers bring all pupils into the lessons. This, together with sensitive support from classroom assistants, particularly helps the pupils with special educational needs. Teachers provide a reasonable range of sources for the older pupils to research. Year 6 pupils, for instance, were excited to use a selection of old newspaper and magazine extracts to guide their research into the 1953 coronation. This helps pupils to develop a good awareness that history can be represented in many ways. Pupils do not consistently make enough use of the computer to find information, in the way that Year 6 did when they researched the arrival of Caribbean culture in the 1950s. Pupils find the idea of the passage of time difficult to hold on to. They do not have a system for remembering the various periods of history and the number of years elapsed. Guide sheets, such as timelines, are not used sufficiently around the school.
103. Teachers now assess pupils' progress at the end of each topic. This gives them a picture of how pupils are progressing towards the annual targets of how each year group should be performing. The teachers are beginning to match the level of the work to the pupils' ability, and the slower pupils get help with writing their ideas. The co-ordinator has monitored the position of history in the school and has a clear picture of how to develop the curriculum to improve standards further. She is particularly concerned to increase the focus given to pupils' understanding of the passage of time. This means extending the valuable links made with styles of writing in the English lessons into numeracy.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

104. Attainment is in line with that expected of pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6, and is similar to that described in the last report. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, although good organisation of lessons in the computer suite ensures that all pupils get good opportunities to learn. Pupils with special educational needs are very effectively supported to ensure they play a full part in lessons and make good progress. For example, assistants or voluntary helpers sometimes work alongside them or careful grouping of pupils allows them to support each other. The very few pupils with English as an additional language are completely integrated into lessons and learn well. Pupils are confident in their use of the computers and excited about the work and this is a positive strength. Teachers have made good progress in making use of the computer suite, but computers in classrooms are less consistently effectively employed.
105. Throughout the school, pupils show confidence with equipment such as tape recorders and players and teachers plan lessons in the computer suite well. This is helped by their growing personal confidence with the computers and the school's effective structure for the subject. Many lessons in the computer suite make good links with pupils' learning in other subjects. Year 2 pupils, for example, confidently log on to the computers and use a graphing program to display data they have collected on subjects such as their pets. They show good independent skills and use the mouse with confidence and accuracy. They add text to simple pictures and use an increasing range of tools in a drawing program. However, the overall standards achieved differ from class to class.
106. Pupils in the junior classes build on their secure skills. Year 3 pupils, for example, apply their increasing understanding of how to program using LOGO to create more complicated shapes. They responded well to the opportunities and worked together very well in carrying out their tasks and discussing what they had found. Effective support for pupils with special educational needs ensures that they make good progress. Pupils recognise

how they can sense information, such as temperature in a science experiment, and display this on a computer. Years 5 and 6 pupils confidently locate information on the Internet relating to their learning in other subjects, often using this effectively to create documents or covers for their work. Year 5 pupils downloaded pictures and information, resizing and reorganising this to print out their results. In a very good lesson, they identified ways to make a questionnaire and collect their data. The teacher's effective questioning led all pupils to extend their understanding well. Year 6 pupils begin to look at a wide range of information from the Internet and elsewhere. Most show good confidence when saving and reloading files as necessary and using search engines to find information. They have developed understanding of ways to use computers to control actions. For example, they devise programs to operate a traffic light sequence correctly using terms such as *instructions* and *outputs*. They persevere well in this difficult task and show good confidence when using the program. By the end of Year 6, pupils organise and assemble information from drawings, photographs and word-processing programs to create their own work. Some show understanding of how to create multimedia presentations. However, the tasks that teachers plan for pupils are often too structured and do not give pupils enough opportunities to develop independence in their work.

107. The co-ordinator has good personal knowledge and skills in the subject. He soundly manages the subject and has been able to lead or organise good training for staff. This, and the revised structure for planning, has contributed to the better teaching in the computer suite. A structured assessment system to help teachers in their planning is being tried out, but is not yet fully in place. Although the content of lessons is monitored through examining teachers' planning, limited opportunities for monitoring restrict the co-ordinator's development planning and the input he can make.

MUSIC

108. Pupils reach the standards expected of their ages by the end of Years 2 and 6. This maintains the levels of attainment described in the last report, although staff changes have led to a reduction in the profile of music in the school. However, the co-ordinator has made a sound evaluation of the school's provision and used this to introduce new materials to support teachers' planning. This gives the school a secure framework to improve provision over the coming years, supported by the developing system of monitoring.
109. Throughout the school, pupils sing with enthusiasm and take particular delight in the actions to many of the religious songs they sing in assemblies. This makes a significant contribution to the very positive atmosphere for learning. When given the opportunity, infant pupils make good attempts to play simple percussion instruments to accompany singers. In lessons, pupils improve their knowledge of musical attributes such as *pulse* and *rhythm* while singing about a 'Bear Hunt'. They make good choices of instruments to produce suitable sounds for different parts of the song.
110. Pupils in the junior classes know different types of songs, for example, referring to 'Bony was a Warrior' as a *sea-shanty*. They recognise an increasing range of musical terms such as *ostinato* and *round*, using them correctly in their answers. They show increasing confidence with a range of pitched and unpitched percussion instruments. Some older pupils begin to identify different *pitch* in songs and recognise how this affects how difficult it is to sing the songs. When singing in large groups, the oldest pupils show increasingly secure singing, holding longer notes and pitching accurately. Teachers leading hymn practices use their good relationships effectively to encourage pupils well and support them to improve their singing. However, more direct teaching to identify what pupils need to do to improve would have a significant impact on their performances.
111. Teaching in music lessons is satisfactory through the school. Teachers prepare well and ensure that they have the necessary resources ready to ensure that lessons are paced

appropriately. They make sure that pupils of all levels of attainment are fully involved in the lessons by asking good questions or supplying supporting materials. Many teachers are not fully confident with teaching the subject and rely heavily on the school's materials to plan their work. This is often effective, although sometimes teachers are limited in their responses if pupils do not follow the lesson well. Where teachers apply their own knowledge and skills to the lessons, the learning is better. Teachers use a wide range of songs and music, including some from other cultures, to support pupils' learning and these contribute to pupils' cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

112. The standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 2 are average, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Standards by the end of Year 6 have improved and are now above average. The school makes good use of the local swimming pool so that the majority of pupils reach the expected standards in swimming. This is due to careful identification of those needing additional support in Years 5 and 6. A very good range of sporting opportunities for pupils of all abilities in after-school clubs and competitions are well supported by committed staff. Amongst these are football, cricket, rounders, badminton, netball, rugby and athletics. Pupils benefit from expert coaching in some of these and opportunities to compete with other local schools. Their success, like winning the local schools' rounders competition recently, is a measure of their effectiveness. Together with good teaching in Years 5 and 6, they boost older pupils' skills considerably and make a significant contribution to the good standards they achieve.
113. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. In Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 it is good overall, with the best teaching seen in Years 5 and 6. Most teachers manage their pupils well and lessons are well organised. As a result, pupils behave very well and disputes are rare. Occasionally, when taken by a teacher other than their own, pupils do not stop and listen as well as they might, and time is wasted in waiting for this to happen. Sometimes pupils lose interest when they are inactive; for example, observing others or waiting their turn. However, most pupils are enthusiastic and hard working because they enjoy their physical education lessons. These are carefully planned using the school's good planning systems and resources. The skills are taught thoroughly with demonstrations that highlight the best techniques to use. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to practise and then use them in small, exciting games. In the best lessons, teachers made good use of examples of pupils' work to help others improve, or intervened with advice and further instructions. All of these features contributed to a successful lesson in Year 5 taken by the co-ordinator where pupils made good strides in their rounders skills. She stopped the game and engaged pupils in a discussion about the best way to hold the baton. As a result of her comments, their batting improved. They thought more carefully about where they wanted the ball to go and understood the value of teamwork.
114. Pupils respond particularly well to challenges set by their teachers. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were more controlled in batting the ball when the teacher asked them to see how many times they could bat without losing the ball. The best example was in a lesson in Year 6 where excellent teaching meant that pupils pushed themselves extremely hard to try to beat their personal best score for the number of actions they could complete in a timed challenge. Control, organisation, levels of challenge and the pupils' sheer enjoyment were all important strengths. What made it particularly effective was the teacher's continuing evaluation and feedback that helped pupils identify ways of improving their individual technique and performance.
115. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and management for the subject. She is enthusiastic, is confident with the subject and its requirements and provides a good teaching example for others. However, in spite of regular monitoring of lessons, the quality of teaching varies greatly from excellent to barely satisfactory. This is because these

observations do not yet focus sharply enough on how well pupils are learning and what features of the teaching are causing this to happen.