

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTH FAILSWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Failsworth, Manchester

LEA area: Oldham

Unique reference number: 105656

Headteacher: Mr. R. Garner

Reporting inspector: G.W. Cooper
23647

Dates of inspection: 5th and 6th February, 2001

Inspection number: 192212

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	mixed
School address:	Paddock Lane, Failsworth Manchester
Postcode:	M35 0NY
Telephone number:	0161 681 6351
Fax number:	none
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Paul Lomas
Date of previous inspection:	17 th February, 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
23647	Mr. G.W. Cooper	Registered inspector
13786	Mrs. S. Walsh	Lay inspector
11611	Mr. J. Hall	Team inspector
27292	Mr. J.W. Calvert	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services

Strathblane House,
Ashfield Road,
Cheadle,
Stockport
SK8 1BB

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

South Failsworth is a large community primary school in Oldham on the boundary with Manchester. There are 405 pupils between the age of five and eleven on roll and 57 children under five attend the nursery part time. Pupils are predominantly white in ethnic background. A small number come from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds. There are no pupils whose home language is not English. About 11 per cent of pupils are entitled to a free school meal, which is broadly average for schools nationally. A total of 60 pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, including a small number of children attending the nursery who have had their special needs identified at an early stage. Most pupils on the register have moderate learning difficulties. Two pupils have a statement of special educational need for specific physical impairment and complex learning difficulties. By the time they enter full time schooling, assessment indicates that pupils have acquired that range of skills and knowledge typical of others of their age. There have been no significant changes in the characteristics of the school since the previous inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school providing very good value for money. Standards are consistently above those expected. Teaching and learning are very good. Management is very good and the leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff of the school are excellent.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment are consistently above the standard expected and frequently well above that standard. The only recent exception has been in writing by the time pupils are seven, where standards are at the level expected nationally.
- The quality of teaching and learning is never less than good and frequently very good and excellent.
- There is outstanding leadership from all who have a key role to play in the management of the school. The leadership and management of the most senior staff are excellent.
- The work of the school is characterised by relationships of a very high standard, committed teamwork and an acute sense of collective purposefulness. This has a profoundly positive effect on the personal development and learning of pupils.
- The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils.
- The school has very good procedures for the assessment of attainment, providing a secure springboard for the consistent pursuit of pupil progress.

What could be improved

- Current standards of attainment in writing are in line with the national average at Key Stage 1 and do not reflect the high standards found in other areas of attainment.
- Pupils use handwriting very efficiently as a tool for communication but significant numbers pay scant attention to the quality of their handwriting; this is not characteristic of the high expectations the school has of pupils.
- Although attendance is satisfactory, there is insufficient monitoring of attendance to identify and support those pupils whose standards of attainment may be affected by irregular attendance patterns.
- Design technology and information and communication technology are not reported separately in annual reports to parents and insufficient use is made of the information the school has on standards of attainment.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since its previous inspection. All the key issues of that inspection have been successfully resolved. Except for writing when pupils are seven, standards have improved significantly over time. Rigorous targets are set and pupils have achieved these targets in recent years. They are on course to achieve the targets for 2001. Effective professional development has resulted in an improved quality of teaching and learning. Good school development planning carefully identifies important priorities. Strong action is taken to ensure that developments happen and are evaluated. This supports the school in maintaining and improving standards. Careful evaluation of cost effectiveness adds further quality to school provision.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	B	A	A	A
mathematics	A	A	A	A*
science	A	A	A*	A*

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

The table shows that except for English in 1998 the attainment of eleven year olds has been consistently well above average. The A* grades in 2000 indicate performance which is in the highest five per cent of schools nationally. Not only does the school compare well with schools nationally but it also compares well with schools in similar social and economic circumstances. The pattern of attainment over time has been consistently good. Both boys and girls attain above the national averages. Significant numbers of pupils attain higher grades in national curriculum tests. Standards of attainment for seven-year-olds are not quite as strong, although they show a trend that is rising overall. In 2000, seven-year-olds attained well above the national average in reading and mathematics and in line with the national standard in writing. The school sets challenging targets. These targets have been met and often exceeded in most recent years. Pupils are on track to achieve targets set for them in the year 2001. Standards of attainment for seven-year-olds and eleven-year-olds in the work seen during inspection are in line with standards achieved in National Curriculum tests in 2000. A particular strength of the school is the standards seen in other subjects of the curriculum. Given the limited curriculum time available after national strategies in literacy and numeracy, pupils achieve well in other subjects of the curriculum. In the work seen during inspection standards are always at least in line with the nationally expected standard and frequently exceed that standard. Learning in many subjects is in great depth where pupils are encouraged to learn as scientists, historians, geographers and designers with a particular emphasis on the development of thinking skills. Given average attainment on entry to full time education and very good standards of attainment by the time they are eleven years old, pupils achieve very well. Children in the Foundation Stage enter school with standards that are broadly similar to those expected. By the time they enter Year 1 they have made good progress and are securely established in their acquisition of the Early Learning Goals.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their life and work in school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are consistently sensible and mature in their behaviour and this has a significant impact on their learning.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The high quality of relationships that characterises the school is fully reflected in the personal development of pupils.
Attendance	Satisfactory. A minority of pupils does not attend consistently well.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The teaching of English and mathematics is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of what needs to be taught in English and mathematics and this is fully reflected in the effective way pupils learn. There is a consistency of approach to classroom management that ensures that no time is wasted in lessons and that pupils are productive in their work. All teachers have a good grasp of how to teach the different subjects of the curriculum, ensuring that learning is achieved in depth. Particularly strong features of teaching are the way teachers involve pupils in their own learning through the discussion of what is to be learned, the brisk pace of most lessons, the quality of questioning which ensures that pupils think and explain, the design of tasks which encourage and challenge pupils and the good use of a range of appropriate resources. Additionally, the school makes very good provision for teaching pupils on the register of special educational needs, which ensures that they are kept in touch with all areas of the curriculum as they learn. As a result of these strengths, the school has high expectations of the learning of all pupils: boys and girls, those of different abilities and different needs. The school has made careful consideration of what national strategies for literacy and numeracy have to offer, given the context of the school, and has made a very thorough and thoughtful response to its implementation of the strategies. This approach ensures that the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is of very good quality. During the inspection all teaching was at least good or better with no unsatisfactory lessons. Almost 50 per cent of lessons were very good or better and two lessons were excellent. Given the standards of the school, the consistent insistence on high standards and good progress, the quality of teaching in the school is very good. There are no significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Not only does the school teach the statutory curriculum and religious education but also subjects are taught in depth and pupils get a richer and broader curriculum through visits out of school and visitors into school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. This is an area where the school makes determined provision and the curricular support pupils receive is well targeted and very effectively managed.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good and significantly improved since the previous inspection. All staff are aware of the need to promote this aspect of the curriculum and the consistent provision they make has beneficial impact upon pupils' personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Systems for checking on and supporting the progress of pupils are very good. There is limited monitoring of attendance. There has been no recent refresher training in child protection for all staff.

Although the school identifies pupils with major attendance problems it does not identify those with more irregular attendance patterns. Parents are very positive about the school. There are good home and school relationships.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher's sense of vision is very well communicated. All key staff are given a significant role to play in the high standards achieved. The school is determined in taking resolute action to pursue its most important priorities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are committed, well informed and bring a wide range of skills and expertise to bear on the work of the school. Some governors are frequent visitors to the school. Others are less well acquainted with its day-to-day standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school has very good systems for evaluating its standards and provision. As a result it knows its strengths and weaknesses well and is strong in the pursuit of further developments.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Human and material resources are good and well deployed. The school knows how to achieve good value for the finance available to it. It is strongly focused on evaluating developments through the application of the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that their child likes school and makes good progress • that teaching and leadership and management are good • that they can approach the school freely to express concerns • that the school has high expectations and promotes children's personal development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amount of homework given • the information they get on children's progress • the range of activities out of school hours

The inspection team strongly endorses the positive views of parents. A minority of parents believes that pupils get too little homework and an equal number believe they get too much. The inspectors believe that the school has struck a good balance in the giving of homework. A very small number of parents believe that the time scale for the completion of homework is too narrow. Although there is insufficient evidence for the inspectors to come to a judgement on this, the matter has been discussed with the school. Some parents have a concern about the information they get on their children's progress. There are two formal opportunities to discuss progress with teachers and this is an adequate provision. Beyond this, parents agree that the school is very approachable if they have any concerns to discuss. Additionally parents receive guidance and curriculum content and approaches to homework. However, the inspection team believes that there are ways in which improvements can be made in reporting pupils' progress to parents. The school provides a good range of activities out of school hours. Some of these occur at lunchtime and may not be regarded by parents as activities out of school hours. Analysis of parental responses indicates that most parents with a negative view about this are parents of younger children in the school. It is most usual in primary schools that such activities are made available to the older pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards of attainment are consistently above the standard expected and frequently well above that standard.

1. Assessment on entry to school indicates that children have acquired a range of knowledge and skills that is similar to the standards attained by others of their age. By the time children are ready to leave the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes) they are well on course to achieve – and in many cases exceed – the Early Learning Goals for children of this age. Children are confident in the way they listen in their classes. Having listened well, they are quick to talk about their own direct experiences and to reveal what they know and understand. Many have mastered the first steps in reading and know a significant number of key words by sight. They are encouraged to take pleasure in books, by visiting the library, by discussing different kinds of books and through role-play in well-known stories. Children are presented with opportunities to write informally as early as their time in the Nursery. By the time they are in the Reception classes, they are already taking the first steps in ‘writing’ their own non-fiction book about the current theme ‘Transport’. There are constant pointers to the world of number. Children in the nursery match the objects in the story ‘Goldilocks’ to the number of bears. They compare sizes of objects. They successfully answer questions such as ‘How many legs on the chair?’ and ‘Which of these is the biggest?’ In Reception pupils have their numeracy skills developed through lessons adapted from the National Numeracy strategy. They have brisk practice in counting forwards and back. Many do this very precisely. As well as recognising numbers they read number words up to five, showing the teacher that they have read the number correctly by showing the number of fingers that match the word. The children working with the teacher use a balance to check their estimate of heavier and lighter objects. Most have good estimation skills and there is lively mathematical discussion of why one arm of the balance goes up and the other comes down.
2. Children are secure and confident in the nursery. There is good provision for Emotional and Personal Development. Children are encouraged to make thinking choices, do things for themselves and they stay focused on activities for long periods of time. A wide range of activities is planned across all the ‘Early Learning Goals’ for the Foundation Stage. Children paint, draw, sing and listen to music. They climb, swing and run. Planned experiences with sand and water further enhance the opportunities available to pupils. They learn to use scissors carefully and safely. Play-Dough is used to shape and mould. A wide range of learning activities is provided in Nursery and Reception classes. The successful intervention in children’s organised play by skilled adults ensures that children make good learning gains before they enter full time school.
3. Good learning opportunities for pupils in Year 1 and 2, coupled with the effect of carefully supportive teaching ensures that these pupils make good progress. By the time they are seven, pupils have attained a range of knowledge, skills and understanding which exceeds the level expected for their age, except in writing. Pupils listen acutely to the teacher and their classmates. They respond well to what they hear. They answer clearly and frequently in detail. Answers explain what they are thinking and how they feel. Reading skills are well established. Pupils discriminate clearly between fiction and non-fiction and have a good early understanding of how to use books for information. Mathematics skills are well developed. Pupils make a sensible choice of the calculation needed to solve a

problem. They explain clearly and confidently what they did. Higher attaining pupils add 4 coins mentally to find the answer 'How much?' With adult support, lower attainers work out correctly how many 10p items they can buy for 50p and how many 3p items they can buy for 18p. They use calculators selectively to support their work and some use computers to work money problems. In science, pupils experiment with batteries and bulbs, devising a simple circuit in which a bulb lights, then recording what they have found out. They use their practical skills well and begin to use a scientific method of working. Teachers place a great emphasis on the development of skills. As a result, there is a good volume of work that indicates what skills pupils have used in history, geography, design and technology. Effective use is made of growing literacy skills to work as historians would, learning the art of historical enquiry and using original sources logically to interpret the past. Artwork is vigorous and strong across a range of different painting and drawing materials. Only in religious education is there not a great volume of written work to be seen. Much of the work pupils do in this curriculum area is through discussion and role-play. By the time they are seven, pupils attain well above average in speaking and listening, reading and mathematics. Attainment in all other subjects of the curriculum is at least in line with the expected standard and it is frequently above. This confirms what school National Curriculum test data indicates.

4. By the time pupils are seven, the results of National curriculum tests for 2000 indicate attainment well above average in reading and mathematics. Attainment in writing was in line with the national average. Compared with similar schools writing is average and reading and mathematics are well above average. The school's results were above the national average at the time of the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained over the years and there is a rising trend of improvement. The greatest impact has been in the number of pupils gaining much higher levels than expected for their age: 37 per cent in reading and 46 per cent in mathematics in 2000. Only in writing does this not apply. Over the past four years boys attain more highly than girls in all subjects. A positive feature of the work of the school is the way both higher attaining pupils and pupils with learning difficulties are challenged and supported. The outcome of this support is shown in the high proportion of pupils gaining the levels expected for their age and the large number of pupils who go on to exceed that level. All pupils make good learning gains.
5. The impetus for learning continues into Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. As a result, by the time pupils are eleven, standards in National Curriculum tests for 2000 were well above national averages and sometimes within the top five per cent of results nationally. Comparing standard test data for 1996 (the year of the results published in the previous report) with the data for 2000, the school has achieved great improvement. Results are consistently above average from year to year and across all subjects tested. Differences between the attainment of boys and girls are very small and there is no consistent pattern. Again, many more pupils achieve the national standard than is the case in most schools. A very large proportion (indeed, a majority of pupils) achieve standards above the level expected for eleven-year-olds: 51 per cent in English, 53 per cent in mathematics and 69 per cent in science. Again, good provision is made to ensure all pupils make efficient progress, whatever their ability or background.
6. In the work seen, throughout Key Stage 2, both in lessons and in pupils' books, standards are similar to those indicated by National Curriculum test results. Speaking and listening is well supported by the positive attitudes of the pupils, meaning that they make the most of the opportunities presented to them. They read avidly and discuss books with great enthusiasm. They are quick to appreciate ideas, themes and styles from their literacy lessons and reflect these as they write. They write

quickly and at length, although this leads to untidy handwriting. The content of their writing is mature and well thought out.

7. In mathematics, pupils are confident and comfortable using a range of mathematical vocabulary that helps them to explain what they know and understand. They are keen to answer the teacher's probing and challenging questions. Many pupils measure angles very precisely to the nearest degree. Lower attaining pupils have a good understanding of different types of angle such as acute, right and obtuse. Higher attaining pupils not only measure correctly but estimate angles very exactly.
8. The work in science reflects a wide range of work on life and living things, materials and physical processes. Pupils cover each area in depth often supplementing class work with their own projects. For example, pupils completed files of homework on 'Metals' developed over a long period of time showing a good understanding of research and presentation of evidence. In the work seen, there is good evidence of aspects of science such as being aware of the need to maintain some factors and vary others, predicting and hypothesising and investigating to discover outcomes. Pupils record the content and outcomes of their investigations well, although some of the work is untidily.
9. Good use is made of numeracy and literacy skills to support work in a range of subjects. Much of the history pupils do is covered in great depth and pupils frequently are challenged to explain why historical events took place or what motivated the action of a historical figure. The school's strategies for teaching information technology are part of the current development plan, which includes additional resourcing and a staff training initiative. Pupils use their existing skills in word processing, handling data and researching with confidence. The school is excited about the benefits of the development programme. The curriculum is broad and wide. For example, pupils sing confidently in assembly. Pupils practising in the school choir sing a two part song with verve, passing the parts from one group to the other. They have a strong tone but also interpret the mood of words well through effective use of dynamics. They learn a new song very quickly.
10. A number of factors govern the high standards achieved throughout the school. Teaching is consistently good, with all staff involved in the unremitting pursuit of pupil progress. Speaking and listening is good in all classes and one factor in this is the good management of pupils by teachers, which results in good behaviour and no wasted time. The organisation of the curriculum is well supported by the planning that teachers do in year teams. The school has good systems for assessment and this is used productively to ensure that one lesson builds coherently on another and that tasks are planned to the needs of different groups of pupils. Good management systems ensure good oversight of the quality of what is being taught and learned.

The quality of teaching and learning is never less than good and frequently very good and excellent.

11. All teaching seen during the inspection was good or better. In the 21 sessions seen, 52 per cent was good, 38 per cent very good and 10 per cent excellent. Overall, the quality of teaching is judged to be very good. The two excellent lessons were literacy sessions, one in Year 3 and one in Year 6. Very good teaching was seen across the school, although teaching was stronger in the later Years of the school. Very good lessons were seen in literacy, mathematics, science and history.

12. There is a great consistency in the quality of teaching, an indication that classroom practice is well managed by senior staff. Teachers manage pupils well. This improves learning significantly: pupils are ready to learn as soon as they enter the classroom and no time is wasted. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They teach confidently and enthusiastically. The quality of teaching inspires pupils to do their best and they become confident and enthusiastic learners. There is very good use of resources. Many staff use information technology as a matter of routine. The learning of two pupils in Year 5 was considerably supported by the confident use of computers in their writing task. The pupils opened their own program, decided which fonts to use and how to set their work out attractively and then typed the text of their task with great speed showing that they are persistent and frequent keyboard users. In another lesson, the teacher prepared a complicated science lesson making great use of web-sites to inform and inspire pupils. He made good use of the overhead projector to ensure that all pupils got the messages he was trying to get across. Excellent use was made of the video camera and screen to give all pupils a clear and safe view of the practical work being demonstrated. All teachers have a strategy of discussing targets for learning with pupils. This is instrumental in keeping pupils closely in touch with what they need to learn. Good use is made of a review session at the end of lessons to confirm what has been learned. This helps to consolidate things in pupils' minds. Teachers have very good questioning styles. Questions are well-targeted on different pupils to ensure that everyone stays alert. Questions are carefully weighted to ensure that pupils with special needs are involved in the lesson and that higher attaining pupils are kept sufficiently challenged. There are good strategies for involving pupils with specific physical difficulties to ensure that their rate of learning is at the correct pace. The school has recently adopted questioning as a development point for all staff. Not only are teachers aware of their own need to question skilfully but also they know that good questions from pupils make for effective learning. Questioning is one of the strategies well used for assessing where pupils are in their learning and what they need to know and do next. Teachers also use their marking well to judge the effect of their work. Books are consistently and supportively marked. Again, this is evidence that the school raises the profile of teaching through regular and systematic sampling of marked work to ensure consistency. The evaluation of work in books through marking is another factor in the consistent progress pupils make: through marking teachers know what should be taught next.
13. There is good liaison between the school and home through homework. A number of projects completed at home were done to a particularly high standard. The planning teachers do in teams has a strong effect on the equal opportunities pupils receive in same age classes. English and mathematics are taught well. Not only have teachers got good subject knowledge but also they teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy to good effect. This inspires pupils to make good use of these skills in their learning.

There is outstanding leadership from all who have a key role to play in the management of the school. The leadership and management of the most senior staff are excellent.

14. Very good teaching and learning and standards of attainment that are well above average indicate a quality of leadership and management that is clear, consistent and effective. The aims of South Failsworth are lucidly expressed, striving towards the education of the whole pupil. The headteacher is a powerful influence around the school. Not only do all in the school know what he aspires towards but also they know what is expected of them to achieve the goals set. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher. They share a sense of educational

perspective and their complementary skills are very well used in leading the school forward. All staff are committed to the school and share a determination to succeed. Staff themselves say that the strength of the school lies in the teamwork. The teamwork applies to all adults working in the school, whether in the classroom or behind the scenes, ensuring that the teaching and learning can take place in an orderly and calm environment.

15. Staff with management responsibilities are given good opportunities to lead their area of responsibility forward. They have considerable responsibilities for managing subjects, finance and resources. Those responsibilities are effectively overseen. The management systems within the school are supportive and clear. For example, staff development and training are priorities. Much staff development is internal to the school, clearly focusing on what is most important to develop.
16. The planning and assessing processes are thorough. Very good joint planning and efficient assessment of what pupils know and can do means that learning is step by step in gaining better standards. Financial structures are well developed. Good match of staff and good resources are the result of a strong focus on what the school's needs are, within a well-managed budget. School development planning is rigorous. It focuses clearly on what needs to be done next to continue to raise standards. The plan is clear in setting out when things have to be done, who has the responsibility, how much priorities should cost to achieve and how the school will weigh up the value gained. The governors are efficient in the discharge of their responsibilities covering all the areas of school management, which are theirs by law. They distinguish carefully between their role as policy makers and the role of the senior managers of the school in delivering policies on a day-to-day basis. They bring a wide range of skills and experience to bear on the needs of the school. They are well informed about the school: through headteacher's reports, through their committee structure and through their informal information gathering. Some visit the school frequently but some find it difficult to visit the school for a specific purpose during its working day. This means that although they are committed to doing their best for the school, some are not always best aware of what the school needs most. Governors have spent a great deal of time and effort in trying to get the format for their annual report to parents right so that parents are well informed through an interesting document. One of the valuable strategies used by governors is to ask parents to fill in a questionnaire about the report so that it can be evaluated and improved in subsequent years. In its endeavour to raise standards and provide a quality education, the leadership and management of the school are fully committed to securing best value for the pupils. The school weighs up its spending decisions very carefully and makes sure that it provides all the care, resources and skills necessary to promote good learning.
17. A particular feature of good management in this school is how well the key issues of the previous inspection have been resolved in securing improvements:
 - in establishing good assessment procedures so that progress is planned for;
 - in getting staff commitment to the consistent application of a strategy for teaching;
 - re-establishing the role of senior staff enabling them to become even more effective in leading the school forward;
 - enhancing the provision for the spiritual development of pupils;
 - and ensuring that pupils have full access to the curriculum.

The work of the school is characterised by relationships of a very high standard, committed teamwork and an acute sense of collective purposefulness. These factors have a profoundly positive effect on the personal development and learning of pupils.

18. The atmosphere for work within the school is one of openness. There is a constant desire to manage change positively and to improve. Policies are regarded as working documents, to be implemented by all. All this is done in good spirit and friendliness. All those interviewed, from members of staff, the governing body, support assistants to senior managers believed that teamwork and commitment to the school's aspirations are the keys to its success. It is a school where all adults are determined to do their best on behalf of the pupils but also where people can smile and take confidence in the support they offer each other. This attitude of mind and commitment to improvement rubs off on the pupils. The role model of the adults inspires pupils, raising their expectations of what they can achieve themselves. They grow in their personal development through confidence, maturity and self-esteem. They know how to behave and work hard. As a result, their quality of learning improves.

The strong personal development of pupils is a reflection of the school's very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

19. The school's provision for the spiritual development of pupils was a key issue of the previous inspection and regarded as unsatisfactory at that time. Provision for spiritual development is now very good and a significant area of improvement. After the previous inspection the school went through a process of self-review, policy making and staff training. The result is that all staff are aware of the 'inner needs' of pupils. The provision starts from assembly where themes are frequently important issues that challenge human existence. For example, one assembly during inspection challenged pupils to consider how and by whom the Earth was made and whether or not it is right and acceptable for different people to hold different opinions. Pupils regularly get opportunities to consider the profound questions that have challenged thinking through the ages. The school is determined to promote the self-esteem of pupils and to give them the challenging opportunities where they can reflect, consider and grow to self-understanding. One Year 5 class considered whether or not war could ever be justified. Both in their discussion and in their writing they revealed thinking of a very mature quality, indicating that their quality of thinking has been enhanced over a period of years. The school shares mutual joy and sadness, again enhancing pupils' understanding of their inner self.
20. The other elements of pupils' personal development follow on as natural consequences. To create an environment where pupils can successfully reflect and think deeply, the school has create an ethos of discipline and order. Pupils know very clearly what is right and what is wrong. If they were tempted to forget, the moral teaching in the school is consistent, clear and fair. Teachers indicate precisely what is acceptable and unacceptable and pupils know precisely where the boundaries are. They also know how they can expect to be praised and rewarded for success and how they can anticipate to be dealt with if they do not stay within the boundaries. Within this atmosphere of discipline, there is an expectation that pupils will treat each other with respect and consideration. The school provides consistently good teaching and frequent opportunities to work together in pairs and groups so that pupils become mature and well adjusted to each other. There is an opportunity for older pupils to participate in a residential experience that teaches them self-reliance in a social setting with their peers. The school receives praise for the standard of mature behaviour that pupils set when in public view. The high standard is fully reflected in what was seen during inspection week. All subjects of the curriculum

promote the cultural development of pupils. A range of visits out of school raises awareness of the culture of the past and the culture of modern communities. Musical opportunities such as listening to inspiring music and performing in groups enhance cultural awareness. Pupils develop cultural awareness through their work in art. Religious education gives pupils insight into the beliefs and practices of different faith communities. The school encourages occasional visitors from different ethnic backgrounds, for example, the recent visit of black African dancers and musicians, raising awareness of other cultures.

The school has very good procedures for the assessment of attainment and this provides a secure springboard for the consistent pursuit of pupil progress.

21. The school has a wide range of assessment strategies, which are used productively to ensure that all pupils make good progress through their time in school. The strategies take place on a day-to-day basis in the classroom. Teachers assess through their well focused questioning. They use marking as an important tool in assessing what pupils know, can do and understand. This assessment is used to group pupils by prior attainment for their tasks and to plan the tasks different groups need. Where teachers have particular concern about lack of progress, the needs of pupils are identified and if necessary, pupils are put on the school's register of special educational needs. The school is determined that these pupils are well provided for, investing finance, time and expertise of high quality. This provision results from effective use of assessment.
22. All teachers maintain a pupil portfolio of assessed pieces of work. Comments on these pieces of work as well as comments in pupils' books analyse their performance against established criteria. This helps the teacher know what needs to come next. Teachers make good use of the assessment information they have to plan what happens in the next lesson. This is an important factor in the progress pupils make. In recognition of the importance of assessment, two members of staff have a management responsibility. The assessment co-ordinator oversees the school procedures and monitors that they are being implemented. A member of staff analyses the data available to the school. This way the school identifies areas of specific strength and weakness. Priorities for development are established as a result. Among the information used is the result of baseline assessment (assessment of what pupils know and can do when they enter full time school), the results of National Curriculum tests (SATs) and the results of a range of other assessment information such as standardised tests (tests which have been validated against national results) and reading tests. The school then has a very clear view of year group, ability group and individual performance. This enables it to be very precise about the targets it sets for progress, ensuring that targets are challenging but attainable. The procedures for assessment have been audited and approved by the local education authority. The school monitors the academic progress of pupils very closely who make impressive gains throughout their time in the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Current standards of attainment in writing at Key Stage 1 do not reflect the high standards found in other areas of attainment.

23. Attainment in the school is consistently above the standard expected and frequently well above that in all areas tested nationally, except for writing in Key Stage 1 (when pupils are seven). Attainment in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with the national average. Trends in attainment over four years suggest that this standard has been quite consistent over the years, although writing attainment was above

average in 1999. In its development planning, the school has made writing a target in this key stage. Although pupils learn the skills of spelling, use of grammatical conventions and punctuation in their literacy lessons, many pupils do not successfully transfer these skills into their longer pieces of writing. Nor do many pupils regard the quality of their handwriting as a high priority. It is noticeable in the marking of work that teachers give frequent reminders to pupils about the things they are not yet doing. These frequent reminders were not seen during lessons. There is insufficient emphasis on correctness and attention to detail to go alongside the speed at which pupils work and the flair with which they express their ideas.

Pupils use handwriting very efficiently as a tool for communication but significant numbers pay scant attention to the quality of their handwriting: this is not characteristic of the high expectations the school has of pupils.

24. Many pupils still form letters irregularly. Writing patterns are not well established. Even in Years 5 and 6, a significant number of pupils have yet to begin to use a brisk and purposeful joined up style of writing which supports efficient speed writing of notes. Some of this lack of attention to good presentation spills over into mathematics. For some pupils, it is difficult to see in their working out how they have arrived at an answer.

Although attendance is satisfactory, more needs to be done to monitor attendance to identify and support those pupils whose standards of attainment may be affected by irregular attendance patterns.

25. The standard of attendance is consistently close to the national average for all schools. The national average has been increasing from year to year but attendance at South Failsworth has not increased over time. The school has effective systems for monitoring the attendance of those pupils with serious and persistent attendance problems. However, there is another group of pupils whose attendance although not persistently bad have irregular patterns of absence. The school does not closely monitor this to identify and support the individual pupils. A brief analysis of school registers suggests that a high proportion of these pupils with irregular absences are girls. There is a four-year trend, most marked for pupils at seven years of age but also marginally in evidence at eleven, for boys to do better in tests than girls. Irregular attendance patterns may be a contributing factor towards the relative under performance of girls.

Design technology and information and communication technology are not reported separately in annual reports to parents and insufficient use is made of the information the school has on standards of attainment.

26. The school has already identified as one of its priorities the need to redevelop the way in which it writes annual reports on pupil progress for parents. Within the format used at present for writing annual reports to parents on pupil progress, design and technology and information and communications technology are not reported separately. As discrete subjects of the National Curriculum they should be separated. Each has its own unique content and range of skills. To report the subjects together fails to give due value to each subject. Reports to parents make insufficient use of assessment information. Only rarely is there guidance about what targets their child should aim at to encourage even further progress.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The Headteacher, staff and governing body should:

- raise standards of attainment in writing in Key Stage 1 by:
 - insisting on the consistent use of punctuation and other skills learned in literacy lessons,
 - achieving a better quality of handwriting;
- consider ways in which the standard of handwriting and presentation throughout the school can be improved;
- develop a strategy for the closer monitoring of attendance as a further enhancement to raising standards of attainment;
- audit the way in which pupils' progress is reported to parents and find ways of developing the use of the school's very good assessment procedures in reporting to parents what pupils know and can do and what they need to do next.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	21
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	38	52	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	29	405
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	Not applicable	45

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4	56

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	28	29	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	25	28
	Girls	27	26	28
	Total	54	51	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (97)	89 (97)	98 (97)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	28	28
	Girls	27	28	28
	Total	54	56	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (92)	98 (93)	98 (98)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	28	31	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	26	26
	Girls	29	29	31
	Total	53	55	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (83)	93 (79)	97 (91)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	26	26
	Girls	25	28	29
	Total	47	54	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (81)	92 (85)	93 (92)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	6
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	337
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR –Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.3
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR –Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	118

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	45

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	729,389
Total expenditure	716,822
Expenditure per pupil	1,648
Balance brought forward from previous year	33,127
Balance carried forward to next year	45,695

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	434
Number of questionnaires returned	72

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	35	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	26	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	35	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	44	7	3	6
The teaching is good.	64	36	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	47	17	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	31	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	19	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	39	46	13	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	64	33	3	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	39	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	33	8	7	19

Other issues raised by parents

Only one other issue was raised by parents, in connection with health and hygiene. It is clear that the school observes local authority policy. Pupils are not at risk.