

INSPECTION REPORT

Corngreaves Infant and Junior School

Cradley Heath, West Midlands

Sandwell

Unique reference number: 103939

Headteacher: Mrs. Linda Collins

Reporting inspector: Mr. Andrew Matthews
19410

Dates of inspection: 07/02/00 – 10/02/00

Inspection number: 193255

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: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Plant Street
Cradley Heath
Warley
West Midlands

Postcode: B64 6EZ

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. S. Hackett

Date of previous inspection: 27/01/97

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Andrew Matthews	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	What sort of school is it?
		Science	The school's results & pupils' achievements
		Art	How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Susanna Stevens	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	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?
Judy Dawson	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children under five	
		English as an additional language	
		English	
		Information and communications technology	
		Music	
John Iles	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Design and technology	
		Geography	
		History	
		Physical education	
		Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Corngreaves Infant and Junior School is located in the Cradley Heath and Old Hill ward. The school predominantly serves the local area, with pupils coming from a range of family backgrounds; an above average number of pupils come from families with lower than average incomes. There are 207 pupils on roll aged between four and eleven (101 boys & 106 girls) and the school is about the same size as most other primary schools. The school has been awarded Enhanced Learning Provision status and this provides additional support for pupils with special educational needs and other small teaching groups. Children under five begin school full time at the beginning of the academic year; their attainment on entry to the school is below average. At the time of the inspection 20 children were under five years of age. Sixteen percent of the pupils are non-white, with seven per cent of the pupils being Pakistani. The percentage of ethnic minority children is average. Forty percent of pupils receive free school meals which is above the national average. There are 64 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, which represents approximately 30 per cent of the school roll; this is above the national average. There are four pupils with statements and this proportion is broadly average. Twenty-five pupils have English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school which is very popular with parents. Standards of pupils' work have risen slightly but are still mostly well below the national average. The school is well led by a new headteacher, who has quickly built up a hard-working team of enthusiastic teachers. There is a shared determination in the school to raise standards. The school gives excellent support to pupils with special educational needs as part of its involvement in the Enhanced Learning Provision initiative. The governing body is supportive but does not yet participate sufficiently in guiding the work of the school. The school receives an above average amount of income and achieves satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and senior management team provide good leadership.
- The provision for lower-attaining pupils is very good and excellent for pupils with special educational needs.
- The relationships in the school and pupils' pastoral care are both very good.
- Pupils enjoy school and their behaviour is good.
- Children make a very good start to their education in the reception class.
- The very strong links with parents and the local community have a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education.

What could be improved

- Pupils' attainment in English and science.
- The monitoring of teaching and the sharing of good practice.
- The use of the results of assessments to help teachers set challenging targets for the pupils.
- The role of the governing body in the development of the school and the monitoring of its performance.

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 overall satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in January 1997. Standards in information and communications technology, religious education, art and music have all risen since the last inspection. However, attainment in English is still below average and attainment in science at the end of Key Stage 2 is well below average. The quality and provision of teaching for the under-fives is of high calibre and high standards have been maintained in the reception class. The quality of teaching has improved and teachers' planning now clearly outlines what pupils are to learn in the lessons; the new marking policy is giving clear guidance to pupils as to how they can improve their work. However, whilst the improved teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and learning, standards are still too low, particularly in English and science.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	All schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	E	E*	E*	E*	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E very low E*
Mathematics	E	E	E	E	
Science	D	C	E	D	

Since the previous inspection, results achieved by 11 year olds in the national tests have consistently remained below average. Results last year show the standards in English are in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. However, the 1999 Year 6 cohort had more than 50 per cent of its pupils on the special educational needs register and, taking this fact into account, these results reflect an overall improvement on the previous year. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve very well but higher-attaining pupils throughout the school are under achieving. Particular weaknesses include the low standards of reading and pupils' lack of ability to use and apply their knowledge in mathematics and science. The school recognises improvements have to be made and teachers are working hard to raise attainment. The headteacher, in close co-operation with the local education authority, has set appropriate targets and has made changes in the organisation of teaching of English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6 to ensure these targets are met. Standards in all other subjects are in line with national expectations, apart from art where the quality of work throughout the school is above average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have a great enthusiasm for school and a positive attitude to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good at all times.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils use their initiative well, take responsibility seriously and get on very well together.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils attend school punctually and there are few unauthorised absences.

Children under five make good progress in gaining confidence and in developing their learning skills. Throughout the school good behaviour and politeness are the norms, with pupils showing good understanding and consideration for each other and for adults. Pupils' personal confidence and good attitudes to work help them react positively to the teaching and learning in the classroom.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall the quality of teaching is good and impacts well on pupils' learning. In the lessons seen 93 per cent were satisfactory or better, 56 per cent good or better and 22 per cent very good or excellent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in seven per cent of lessons. Particular strengths occur in Reception, Year 1 and Year 5, due to the teachers' good subject knowledge, concentration on the basic skills, good pace to learning and effective management of the pupils. There is some inspirational teaching in Year 5, leading to rapid gains in pupils' learning. Teaching in literacy is satisfactory overall, and in numeracy it is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. The teaching of reading is unsatisfactory through the school and in Key Stage 2 there is some lack of subject knowledge in the teaching of investigations in mathematics and science. The teaching of art throughout the school is consistently good. Special educational needs pupils receive excellent support from the special educational needs co-ordinator, special needs support assistants and highly trained parents and, as a direct result, make very good progress. Marking is now good overall but there is inconsistent use of the results of assessments to plan future work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good in the under-fives and Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. The National Literacy Strategy is not raising standards in reading and there is a lack of opportunities for practical work in mathematics and science.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Excellent. The school makes very good use of its Enhanced Learning Provision funding which provides excellent support for these pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school makes good use of the local authority support teachers who work alongside these pupils where necessary.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education and good overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has good procedures for looking after the pupils' personal welfare. There are inconsistencies in both key stages in using assessment to inform planning for the whole year and day-to-day lesson planning. The standard of written reports is satisfactory but some are too perfunctory and do not clearly identify standards or how pupils can improve.

The school has good relationships with parents who contribute much to their children's learning, both in school and at home. The school's arrangements for setting pupils in Years 5 and 6 are helping teachers to challenge pupils more effectively. The school is a caring environment where all are valued regardless of race, background or gender.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior staff provide good leadership and the school has a supportive and hardworking staff who are committed to raising standards. Most co-ordinators have sufficient skills to raise attainment further in their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are supportive of the school but are not involved sufficiently in strategic planning or in monitoring the school's performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school, together with governors, has carefully analysed the school's performance in the National Curriculum tests to identify weaknesses and to set targets for improvement. There is not, at present, sufficient monitoring of teaching so that weaknesses are addressed and good practice is shared amongst all staff.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Staff working with the under-fives and those supporting pupils with special educational needs are very effective. The school makes satisfactory use of the funds available to improve resources, with the exception of information technology where there is still an insufficient number of computers.

Staffing and accommodation in the school are adequate. The quality and quantity of books in the school's library are unsatisfactory. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily and consults well with parents. The new headteacher has brought added strength to the school management but the issue of raising attainment has only begun to be seriously addressed since her arrival.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children enjoy coming to school and make good progress. The teaching is good and children behave well. The positive attitudes that the school promotes. The school has good relationships with parents and children are expected to work hard. The school is well managed and is approachable. Children who have learning difficulties are very well supported. Computers are now used more regularly in lessons. Newsletters are regular and informative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More challenge for the brighter children. The way the school organises reading. A more interesting range of extra-curricular activities. More information on how to help their children at home.

The inspection team found that the parents' positive comments about the school were justified. The team agrees that the more able children should achieve better and that the way the school organises reading is not raising standards. In comparison to most schools, there is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. Whilst homework is now more regular, the school is aware that more information is needed to clarify how parents can help their children.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 for 1999 show that pupils' performance in English was very low and was well below average in science and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 was well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. When compared to the previous year, these results show that low attainment continued in English and mathematics but that attainment in science fell. However, the 1999 results were achieved by a cohort that had over 50 per cent of its pupils on the register of special educational needs and it is therefore difficult to make accurate comparisons with the previous year. In the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading were very low and well below average in writing and mathematics. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was below average in writing, well below average in reading and very low in mathematics. In both key stages the school results, although well below national averages, closely mirror the national trend in all core subjects. In science, teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that standards were well below national averages in all aspects of the subject. These weaknesses closely reflect attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, where pupils' attainment is again well below average. In comparison with similar schools, the Key Stage 1 results in reading and mathematics for 1999 are well below average and below average in writing. In science in Key Stage 2 the results are below average but well below average in mathematics and very low in English. Over the last three years, girls have slightly outperformed boys but there is not a significant variation between the genders. There is little variation in the attainment of pupils who have English as an additional language or come from different ethnic backgrounds.
2. Children under five enter Reception with attainment that is below that expected of similar age children. Children make rapid and effective progress in learning and by the end of their time in Reception most attain levels near that of children of a similar age. Evidence from the inspection shows that the good teaching and learning in Reception is beginning to impact on attainment in Key Stage 1 where standards are rising. This is particularly evident in Year 1 where high quality teaching and effective use of assessment is resulting in some average attainment in English and above average attainment in aspects of mathematics and science. A teacher who moved to Year 2 at the beginning of the school year is also instrumental in beginning to raise pupils' attainment. However, inspection evidence shows that whilst attainment in mathematics is average at the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and science are still below average. Last year's two Year 2 classes have been combined into a large Year 3 class and this has created organisational difficulties for the experienced teacher. However, these pupils and those in Year 4 are making satisfactory progress, although their attainment in English and mathematics is below average. There is a high proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs in the Year 5 class but these, and other pupils in the class, achieve appropriately and have very good attitudes to their work. Attainment in the present Year 6 cohort is average in mathematics, below average in English and well below average in science. Both in English and science, much more needs to be done by the school to raise attainment and achievement in these two subjects. Compared to the last inspection, standards have remained the same in both key stages in English and mathematics and in science in Key Stage 1; in Key Stage 2 standards in science have fallen. In information and communications technology, religious education art and music standards have risen since the last inspection, in all other subjects standards have remained the same.
3. The school, in conjunction with the local education authority, has set sufficiently challenging targets for improvements in English and mathematics and is on course to meet them. There are regular reviews of targets and the headteacher and senior management team are beginning to look far more closely at ways of raising standards. Recently amended targets for 2000 are that 50 per cent of pupils should attain average or above average standards in English and mathematics. Through reorganising the teachers in a variety of year groups and setting by ability for English and mathematics, the school has sought to make the best use of particular strengths in teaching.
4. By the end of both key stages, pupils' skills in speaking and listening are below average. Throughout the school teachers work hard to develop these skills using them effectively to assess, consolidate and extend pupils' learning. However, the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy in which the school has been involved for the last four years, has not yet been instrumental in raising pupils' attainment in reading and writing. Pupils have a sound knowledge of basic spelling, grammar and punctuation and in most cases apply this knowledge effectively in their written work. However, the school has not yet fully

addressed the issue of pupils developing their writing skills across the curriculum and, in subjects such as science, there are missed opportunities for pupils to use their skills to write up the results of investigations. Handwriting skills are taught regularly but in Years 3 and 4 the sound progress made in Key Stage 1 is not maintained and pupils' writing and presentation is sometimes untidy in other subjects. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced and there is clear evidence that teachers emphasise numeracy in other subjects such as science and design and technology: this was the case when Year 5 pupils used syringes to calculate how much water had been lost in their evaporation investigation.

5. Pupils with special educational needs and those with statements of special educational needs make very good progress overall. This is due to the excellent organisation of the subject, the very good support that pupils receive from their teachers, special needs support assistants and from well trained parents. Their work is governed by very clear targets on pupils' individual education plans. The combination of the clear targets and very good support, results in pupils making very good progress. Pupils' attainment is below the national average in most subjects. The planning for higher-achieving pupils is not effective and, as a result, the attainment of the higher-achieving pupils in both key stages is not as high as it should be. The one clear exception to this is the outstanding art work produced by a Year 6 pupil as a direct result of the challenging assignment from the teacher. Three children in the school, all in Reception, are receiving good additional language support from the local education authority specialist staff, and achieve standards similar to those of other children.
6. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to improve pupils' competence and attainment in information technology. As a result, pupils achieve satisfactory standards in this subject and have particularly well-developed word processing skills in Year 6, which are well used by pupils when they produce a regular school newsletter for parents. In the other subjects attainment is at least at the levels expected for pupils aged seven and 11. In art, standards are high, with pupils using a wide range of resources in the good quality displays around the school. In design and technology, older pupils understand the importance of evaluation in the making process and younger pupils in Year 1 produce good quality designs for their fairy tale moving pictures. Pupils enjoy geography and use aerial photographs effectively to identify local features. A strength in history is the pupils' understanding of earlier times through their use of resources from the Victorian and Second World War eras. Pupils sing well and Year 6 pupils show good knowledge of timbre, dynamics and tempo when composing music for a given theme. Standards are high in swimming and pupils benefit from good quality coaching at their regular visits to the local pool. Pupils also benefit from the range of extra-curricular opportunities which help to raise standards. In religious education standards are now in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages with older pupils having a good insight in to similarities and differences of some of the major religions.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Most pupils show positive attitudes to their school and to their learning. They are enthusiastic, share opinions and resources well and involve themselves in discussions and activities with obvious enjoyment. These good attitudes make a substantial contribution to their attainment and progress. Parents endorse the school's promotion of positive attitudes and agree that children enjoy coming to school. Pupils listen well to their teachers and are encouraged to develop concentration from their earliest entry to the school. They are willing to respond in question and answer settings and collaborate well with their peers and school staff. Pupils are tolerant and understanding when others with special educational needs are supported in classrooms and during break times or when the pace of a lesson is less demanding.
8. Behaviour of the majority of pupils is good and has a direct impact on the orderliness of the community and the quality of daily life in the school. Where teaching is secure and tasks are appropriately matched to the needs of pupils, they are attentive, polite and bubbling with enjoyment, for example during the designing of a toy in a Key Stage 2 design and technology lesson. They are respectful of one another and the staff. The significant minority of pupils who show potentially disruptive and challenging behaviour patterns are well managed by the great majority of staff, following established strategies. Pupils are encouraged to develop self discipline and to follow their own class rules, reinforced by "consequences" devised by themselves. Celebration assemblies also reinforce an effective awards system for behavioural improvement. There have been four fixed period exclusions during the academic year prior to the inspection related to unacceptable behaviour. The school works effectively to keep exclusions to a minimum; there were two exclusions in the previous year.

9. Pupils' personal development is good overall. They enjoy working together in groups and pairs and organise tasks within groups in a sensible and productive manner. They accept a challenge with great enthusiasm such as the best method for producing a gas to represent a volcanic eruption during a Key Stage 2 science lesson. The pupils comment that they like their teachers and respond very well to the warm and caring relationships they have with the staff in the school. Pupils have classroom responsibilities which all, including those children under five, carry out sensibly and carefully. Class helpers assist teachers with duties such as tidying up, taking registers to the office or delivering messages. A strong feature of their personal development is the sense of responsibility that all pupils have for the care and well being of the pupils with special educational needs, those from ethnic minorities and the very young. Pupils are encouraged to be independent and to be responsible for their actions, and within controlled guidelines, to organise their work. They respond very well to these opportunities such as Key Stage 2 pupils writing and editing the monthly newsletter. Pupils understand that bullying is not tolerated and acknowledge that this relates to a very small number of pupils. They are confident that the school will listen and deal with any problems they have. Pupils treat the numerous stimulating wall displays with respect and the daily use of resources with care. They reflect on others' viewpoints in a mature fashion, for example during assembly, and when discussing the differences and similarities between the Muslims' and Christians' respect for God as presented by the local vicar.
10. Attendance at the school is in line with the national average and is satisfactory. There is minimal unauthorised absence and authorised absence relates to illness and holidays in term time. Pupils are mostly punctual, registration is prompt and efficient and lessons begin on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. The quality of teaching is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Only seven per cent of lessons observed were unsatisfactory and over half the lessons seen were taught well. In over 20 per cent the quality of teaching was very good and occasionally excellent. This high level of very good and excellent teaching was especially evident in Reception, Year 1 and Year 5 and had a significantly positive effect on these pupils' learning.
12. In the reception class the teaching is good overall, with one third of the lessons seen being very good. The teacher and the nursery nurse know their children very well and have a good understanding of areas of learning for the under-fives. They work very closely with the well-trained assistants and this good quality teamwork and high expectations of the children make a significant contribution to their learning. The teaching of all areas of learning is good overall and children flourish in this environment of high expectations. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is a strength. Children enjoy writing in books so they can see the progress they are making and carefully-planned play activities develop children's concept of weight, capacity, shape and space. Learning is exciting for these children: the ice balloons inspired the use of new words and challenged their previously held understanding that balloons were light and soft. Very careful planning ensures that all areas of learning are developed appropriately. There is, however, a weakness in the planned opportunities for regular outdoor physical activity and as such children miss out on elements of their physical and social development.
13. The quality of the teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall; it varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. Despite the school being involved in the pilot Literacy Strategy, a majority of teachers have not benefited from the most recent training; most do not set sufficiently challenging work for the average and higher-attaining pupils and, as a result, pupils' attainment is not as high as it should be. Whilst teachers' planning ensures all aspects of the subject are covered, the actual teaching of reading is inconsistent through the years and by the age of 11, pupils have well below average skills and little excitement for books. Pupils' attitudes to reading are not helped by the unsatisfactory teaching of library skills that limits their use of this resource. However, the exception is the teaching of reading for pupils with special educational needs; extra support from highly skilled assistants and well-trained parents leads directly to these pupils making very good progress and developing a love of books. Handwriting is taught satisfactorily, but in Years 3 and 4 standards are not maintained in all subjects with some careless presentation in science. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced and this is leading to improved standards in both key stages. Teaching is generally good and most lessons have good pace and clear learning objectives that are shared with the pupils. Teachers use questioning well and challenge pupils of all abilities; teachers' planning takes good account of pupils' responses and marking of pupils' work is beginning to identify how they can improve. As a result of these strengths, pupils' attainment in mathematics is rising through the school.

14. In both key stages, teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and work hard to meet their needs. This is particularly evident in the planning of work for pupils with special educational needs. The good quality individual education plans for these pupils and the careful match of work, ensures that these pupils make very good progress in meeting their targets. Instrumental in this very good progress is the very good support that pupils receive from the special needs support assistants and the high quality input from the special educational needs co-ordinator who oversees all the special needs work in the school. Teachers use their special needs assistants and parents very effectively and it is this very effective partnership which is central to the progress that these pupils make. Teachers' planning has improved since the last inspection, with clear identification of what pupils are to learn during the lesson. However, there are some weaknesses in this planning: it does not challenge the higher-attaining pupils sufficiently and also does not take enough account of the results of assessments so that areas of weakness are addressed. Most of these plans are well used by the teachers but occasionally, such as in a Year 4 science lesson, the plans are not referred to and elements of the planned work are not taught.
15. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory overall but there are wide variations; a Year 2 teacher's good subject knowledge in physical education led directly to pupils being challenged in their activities and performing to high standards. However, lack of subject knowledge in Year 6 science and English lessons resulted in pupils being given inaccurate information and set inappropriate work that resulted in pupils making very little progress towards the lesson's objectives. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils have confidence to talk to teachers about what they do not understand and this enables teachers to focus their teaching more accurately. These high quality relationships also play a major role in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers' expectations are satisfactory overall but are generally not high enough in English and science in Key Stage 2. As a result average and higher-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and do not achieve as well as they should.
16. Teachers manage pupils well and as a result pupils' behaviour is good and they quickly settle down to work; most concentrating well on the set task. However, when occasionally the task is not well matched to pupils' abilities, their concentration wanes and they make little progress. Resources are used very well in the Reception class. Good use is made of resources in Key Stage 1 but, in Key Stage 2, teachers do not give enough opportunities for practical investigations in mathematics and science. The new homework policy is working well and helps pupils to consolidate and extend their learning. The quality of marking has improved since the new policy was introduced last term and it is giving pupils a clearer indication of what they need to do to improve their work. In both key stages, most of the teaching is good but there are variations between subjects. The teaching in mathematics, geography, physical education, art and music is good. Specialist subject knowledge in the teaching of swimming contributes to high standards. Despite the quality of teaching observed during the inspection being good overall, some average attaining and most higher-attaining pupils are not learning as quickly as they should do. The school ensures that all pupils including those with special educational needs have equality of access to the curriculum and to extra-curricular activities. The school's mission statement indicates a strong commitment to equal opportunities and this is reflected in curriculum policies. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of a number of pupils with specific religious beliefs and ensure that they have appropriate access to all aspects of school life, within the limitations of those beliefs.

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

17. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is broad and balanced and covers the requirements of the National Curriculum. The current emphasis on implementing the National Literacy Strategy and dedicated daily mathematics lessons is effectively raising standards. Literacy and numeracy permeate through other subjects and good links are evident in religious education, history and design technology. In these subjects the application of skills and the use of language learned in the literacy hour is applied well. For example, although no teaching of history was observed, in discussion, a pupil described how the events of World War II affected the life of his grandfather, making appropriate reference to primary and secondary sources of evidence. In science, the application of measures was used effectively to gauge the rate of evaporation of water. The guidance for art is of good quality and supports teaching well. This results in art being a strength of the school and showing a good improvement since the previous inspection. The serious weaknesses in planning for information technology, art and religious education have received appropriate attention and are now satisfactory. The locally agreed syllabus for religious education is followed. However, although the curriculum is broad and balanced, there are weaknesses that are having a detrimental effect on pupils' learning. In English, the school's use of the National Literacy Strategy is not providing sufficient structure to the teaching of reading and, as a result, standards are not improving sufficiently quickly. In science, the newly-introduced scheme of work is giving sufficient structure but some of the planned work is not being covered systematically by the teachers; this is leaving gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding which is slowing their progress. Investigative work in mathematics and science is not well planned and there is a lack of planned opportunities for pupils to use their subject knowledge in practical situations.
18. Provision for children under five is very good because the curriculum provides children with a wide range of stimulating experiences linked well to the areas of learning for children under five. Whilst there is a good balance of structured play activities and opportunities for independent and group learning there is a lack of planned opportunities for outside physical activity. However, the teacher does ensure, through careful planning, that there is a smooth transition to the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum.
19. The curriculum includes provision for pupils' personal and social development and good attention is given to providing equal opportunities for all pupils including those with special educational needs. The policy for special educational needs is of good quality and meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. Individual educational plans are well linked to the curriculum and set specific targets for individuals which enable them to access the same lessons as their friends at an appropriate level. A statement on sex education links provision appropriately to learning in science and through pupils' personal development. Good use is made of outside agencies to deliver this aspect of the curriculum. A weakness is the lack of attention given to drugs awareness. At present there is no clear guidance and this aspect is under review by the governors. The newly appointed headteacher is planning to review the curriculum in the light of the new National Curriculum for the year 2000.
20. The school offers a good range of extra curricular events for pupils, including choir, dance and a football club organised by a parent. A fuller programme is organised for the summer term and includes cookery, gymnastics, art and computer clubs. Visitors to the school are welcomed and provide additional opportunities to develop pupils' learning experiences.
21. The school has established good links with the community. Local church leaders visit the school regularly and make significant contributions to the teaching of religious education and in a wider pastoral context. Several past pupils of the school maintain contact with the school with some working regularly with the pupils. The school is well known and respected in the area. Local companies sponsored the purchase of a mobile stage and helped with refurbishment of the building.
22. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good and is similar to the standards at the previous inspection. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. School worship makes a good contribution to spiritual development. There are valuable opportunities for reflection when pupils have time to consider wider issues of the spiritual dimension of life. Pupils readily express a sense of awe and wonder in their growing knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Pupils in a science lesson were very excited when a mixture of bicarbonate of soda and vinegar produced a gas which inflated balloons that were fixed to the necks of bottles. A boy proudly and sensitively described his grandfather's experiences when he served in the Royal Navy during the previous world war.

23. Provision for moral development is good. Pupils in class rallied to support a distressed boy when his behaviour was becoming challenging to the teacher. The teaching of fables in English contributes to pupils' moral development. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. Classroom rules are clearly posted and, with very good classroom management strategies, teachers ensure that the rules are respected and consistently applied. The moral development of pupils with special educational needs is very good.
24. The school encourages pupils to relate effectively to others. Pupils demonstrate good manners at all times. All children have friends and it is very unusual to see a child on his own in the playground. Caring for others is a normal part of school life. Older pupils take responsibility to comfort younger pupils when they fall in the playground, until adult help is available.
25. There is a range of displays in the school which celebrate different cultures. Religious education provides valuable insights into our multi-faith society. Visitors to the school introduce pupils to brass band music. However, the school creates too few opportunities for pupils to experience non-European music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

26. The pastoral care the school provides for its pupils is good, enabling them to feel confident and happy and participate fully in all aspects of the school day and their learning. The very good relationships between the staff and the pupils are an important component in the quality of this care, which has been maintained well since the last inspection. The teaching and support staff know their pupils well, are very approachable and sensitive to their needs and are always swift to praise or greet the children with a friendly word.
27. Children in the reception class enjoy a cheerful and welcoming atmosphere, where they are encouraged to participate and learn what is expected of them. Staff consistently reinforce good behaviour and attitudes to work with the appropriate use of praise. Parents are welcomed into the classroom and understand the need for punctuality to enable the children to settle quickly into daily routines. Satisfactory records are kept of the children's progress and these are used well to plan future work. Parents are involved in any social or learning problems at an early stage. Parents of children with special educational needs feel their children are very well supported.
28. Welfare of the pupils is an important aspect of the school. There is a continuity of care throughout the school day. Supervision at all break times and during the midday meal is good; pupils feel comfortable with the arrangements for the consumption of food and are seen in pleasant social exchange with midday staff as they choose their food. The school has good procedures for health and safety, which are carefully followed. In lessons, such as design and technology, emphasis is placed on the careful handling and storage of tools and equipment. The headteacher is the designated member of staff for child protection and has received appropriate training. Staff awareness is reinforced by discussion at staff meetings. There are good first aid procedures, with trained staff known to pupils. The visiting school nurse assists with elements of sex education as appropriate and issues of healthy living and healthy lifestyles are promoted in science and religious education. A comprehensive all-school circle time programme contributes to the effective personal and social education of the pupils. Self confidence is enhanced and awareness of their responsibilities towards themselves and others is one of the areas explored during these sessions.
29. Pupils' attendance is monitored consistently, with close co-operation from the Education Welfare Officer. Data is analysed for any emerging patterns of absence and parents generally co-operate in advising the school of reasons for absence. The school monitors punctuality closely and liaises with parents of those few pupils who are persistently late to school. Records are kept of significant poor behaviour and all staff communicate well to enable a consistent approach to the management of unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils understand what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and draw up class rules that are clear and known to them all. The school has very good procedures for dealing with the very low level of bullying and pupils are confident that any problems will quickly receive the full attention of adults in the school.
30. There is an effective system for providing support and advice to pupils which enhances their personal and social development. Staff know their pupils well and any problems that arise are recognised quickly and appropriate help and guidance given. Celebratory assemblies are used for giving recognition to pupils who work hard or achieve a personal best in behaviour or a set task. Pupils value this award system and

the peer recognition they receive. Pupils with individual education plans have clear targets set and are given excellent support. However, owing to inconsistencies in the use of assessment details, other pupils do not receive such a good quality level of support and advice to enable them to improve.

31. The quality of assessment in the school is satisfactory. Baseline assessment is used to identify lower and higher attaining children. A wide range of assessments is undertaken, using end of key stage national assessments, non statutory tests and yearly reading tests. While the development of assessment procedures has been partially addressed, the information gained from tests is poorly used to influence curriculum planning. As a result, strengths are not identified and weaknesses are not systematically addressed in the long- and medium-term planning. This is one of the principal reasons for the lack of noticeable improvements in the school's national test results over the last three years.
32. Day-to-day assessment is of sound quality. Teachers include assessment opportunities within their lesson plans identifying learning objectives for individuals and groups. They use this information appropriately to adapt their planning for the following lessons. This is an improvement on the previous report when teaching was not influenced by systematic checks on the progress individuals made in lessons. However, a minor weakness in this respect is that the information is not always used sufficiently well to identify challenging learning experiences for higher-achieving pupils.
33. The quality of assessment and monitoring procedures for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Because the special needs co-ordinator has recently taken over the responsibility for managing assessment across the school, the quality of procedures and practice is improving rapidly. The school was aware that assessment procedures were not rigorous enough and has taken appropriate action to address the issue. There has been insufficient time for the current practice to become firmly established and to impact on progress. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported by the local authority specialist teachers who work closely and effectively with the class teachers.
34. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance are satisfactory. Teachers keep appropriate records of pupils' progress but they are not yet standardised; there are variations in how well these records are maintained.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35. There is a good partnership between the school and parents and this has a beneficial impact on pupils' attainment and in the quality of their learning experience. Parents confirm that the school listens to complaints and suggestions although they do not always report back to parents on decisions they have taken. Parents feel they have good access to staff if they have any concerns. This strong relationship with parents and carers has been maintained well since the last inspection.
36. The majority of parents are very supportive of the work of the school, value the educational opportunities provided and the good care the school takes of their children. The parental questionnaire reinforces these views, as did conversations with parents during the inspection. Parents know they are always welcome to talk to teachers or simply to chat at the beginning and end of the school day. Parents of children in the reception class comment that the information they receive and individual procedures for both parents and children are helpful and enable children to settle quickly and happily. Day-to-day information about activities in the school is sent out by means of a monthly newsletter, compiled and produced by Key Stage 2 pupils. The information for parents about the school is practical and embraces comprehensive curriculum details at the beginning of each term. There are termly parent evenings with opportunities for formal consultation on their children's progress. There are special meetings for parents whose children are on the special educational needs register in addition to parents' meetings and induction meetings. Pupils' annual reports fulfil statutory requirements overall; however, they vary in the quality of the information regarding progress and attainment, although they generally indicate targets for improvement.
37. Parents' involvement in school life is very good and the quality of the voluntary help they give in classes has a very beneficial impact on the quality of the children's learning. The school involves parents in decision making, for example, the content of a homework policy and home/school agreements. Parents' response to the questionnaires reflects the view that they are valued by the school. The school encourages parents to formalise their classroom activities into a qualification through local agencies if they wish to develop their role in school. Friends of Corngreaves School organise a range of fund raising activities such as running the tuck shop, social events and subsidising school visits.

38. The majority of parents are satisfied with the amount of homework that the school provides and are willing to help their children at home with reading, spelling, tables and project work. However, the information sent to parents about how they can help their child at home does not always give clear enough guidance. The school organises curriculum meetings for parents such as one to outline the Numeracy Strategy. Parents whose children have special educational needs are encouraged to take a full and active part in helping with their child's individual education plans. However, some parents choose to have little involvement in their children's education despite the best efforts of the school. The home/school agreement provides an effective means of promoting partnerships between home and school reinforced by the quality of the information available from the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

39. The new headteacher manages the school well and provides firm and determined leadership and a clear educational direction. In the short time since her appointment, she has analysed the needs of the school and correctly identified the tasks that need to be undertaken to raise standards from the present low levels. Some teachers have changed year groups so that expertise is spread more evenly through the school. The teaching of English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is now in groups that are ability set. The senior management team brings good experience and support to members of staff. Whilst subject co-ordinators show commitment to developing their subjects, not all have the necessary subject knowledge to inspire colleagues and to raise standards. This is particularly so in English and mathematics. Co-ordinators in information and communications technology, music and religious education that were unsatisfactory subjects in the previous inspection, have been instrumental in helping colleagues raise standards in their respective subjects. Staff work well together and have a clear commitment to raising standards for all pupils. In the case of pupils with special educational needs this is done most successfully, with these pupils making very good progress towards the targets set for them. However, for higher-attaining pupils there is not always sufficient challenge in the work and these pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
40. The school has made overall satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Standards in information and communication technology, religious education, art and music have all risen since the last inspection. The quality and provision of teaching for the under-fives is of a high calibre and high standards have been maintained in the reception class. The quality of teaching has improved; there has been a marked decrease in the percentage of unsatisfactory lessons and the proportion of very good or better lessons has increased significantly. Teachers' planning now clearly outlines what pupils are to learn in the lessons and the new marking policy is giving clear guidance to pupils as to how they can improve their work. However, whilst the improved teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and learning, standards are still too low, particularly in English and science.
41. Governors are supportive and several visit the school on a regular basis to help in classes or to look round. However, there is no tradition of regular focused visits to the school. Whilst governors do have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school they are too reliant on information given by the headteacher. As such, they do not have enough first hand knowledge to act as critical friends to the school or to provide a sense of direction for its work. They do, however, hold the school to account for its standards, with much debate taking place when last year's below average National Curriculum test results were received.
42. The aims and values of the school are reflected very well in the following areas of school life:
- the happy and stable environment which values the individual;
 - the fostering of the emotional, social and physical well-being of the pupils;
 - the encouragement of positive behaviour, politeness and self-discipline;
 - the encouragement of mutual respect and co-operation
 - the good partnerships with parents and the local community.

All these aims have a positive effect on pupils' learning in the school. However, the fundamental aim that all pupils achieve their full academic potential has not yet been realised.

43. The headteacher has seen all teachers at work in the classrooms; however, there is, at present, no regular and systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. As a result the good and often very good teaching that was observed during the inspection, is not being shared and weaknesses are not being addressed. However, plans are in place for the monitoring of teaching to resume later this term. The new headteacher's main priority in her first term was to visit all the classrooms and to monitor pupils' work in

the three core subjects. As a result of this work, the new marking policy was introduced. Annual appraisal is in place and targets set that reflect the school's immediate priorities and the individual's personal requirements. However, a weakness of the present system is that these targets are not regularly reviewed through the year.

44. The school development plan was completed before the arrival of the new headteacher. It has since been supplemented by two further plans that are based on reviews of the school's work that the headteacher has carried out. In this way the school has developed a set of priorities that clearly prioritise the needs of the school and include all the issues for improvement, including the raising of attainment, highlighted by the inspection team. The plan is clearly targeted and dated, with clear success criteria and supported by careful financial planning. There are clear links between the setting of the budget and the plan. However, the previous development plans have all failed in their fundamental target of raising attainment in the core subjects through the school.
45. The school's finances are in good order. There are good financial systems in place and governors regularly monitor spending. They are very well supported by the school secretary who keeps clear records of curriculum spending, as well as records of other funds for which the school is responsible. The school administration is very efficient, with day to day routines well established. The school makes good use of new technology, such as using computers to record and monitor attendance. The most recent audit report had few recommendations, all of which have been dealt with effectively. The budget for special educational needs pupils, which is greatly enhanced by extra money generated by the school's Enhanced Learning Provision status, is extremely well spent. The special educational needs co-ordinator and the special educational needs support assistants provide valuable support to individuals and groups of pupils. As a result of this provision, pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and make very good progress towards their targets.
46. The school works closely with a teacher-training establishment and has students on a regular basis. The school gives careful consideration to the principles of best value through the work of the headteacher and the governing body. It consults with parents and the community over relevant matters and receives good support from them. It is aware of its position compared with local schools and shows due regard to competition when buying new resources. The school gives satisfactory value for money.
47. The school has a satisfactory level of teaching staff who are appropriately qualified to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. Co-ordinators give overall satisfactory leadership to their subjects and in the under fives, history, art and information and communications technology leadership is good. The school has a good number of support staff who make a very valuable contribution to the learning of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. The school also makes very good use of its parents, many of whom receive training by the school and from outside agencies. Several of these parents work in school every day to support pupils on such projects as the "ENABLE" reading recovery scheme, which have a very high success rate in raising pupils' attainment. The school has a satisfactory induction policy for new members of staff. Good use is made of the skills of the headteacher and the education authority music support service who have helped to raise attainment in this subject. There has been some strategic redeployment of teachers through the school during this year, but the Year 6 teacher has not yet had the necessary support to ensure that she has the skills and subject knowledge to be able to challenge the pupils in her new age group.
48. Overall the accommodation is satisfactory and enables the curriculum to be taught effectively. Repainting has improved the condition of the school since the last inspection. There are specialist rooms for literacy withdrawal and special educational needs. The hall is of good size for physical education and doubles up effectively as a dining room. Classrooms are of an adequate size for the number of pupils and most are bright and stimulating. The school has a large playground but has no playing field. A discrete play area has been created for the under-fives since the last inspection. The provision of resources for learning is satisfactory overall; weaknesses highlighted in the last inspection have been addressed in music and religious education. In mathematics, art and the under-fives resources are good and in the area of special educational needs, resources are very good. In information and communications technology there are not sufficient resources. The school library does not have a satisfactory number or range of books and is not organised so that pupils can quickly locate books; as such, it is an under-used resource that provides too little support for pupils' learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. In order to improve standards of attainment and the quality of education, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Improve pupils' attainment in English by:
 - continuing to improve teachers' subject knowledge;
 - having higher expectations of the more able pupils;
 - implementing a systematic and structured programme of reading throughout the school;
 - raising expectations of pupils' writing skills across the curriculum;
 - ensuring that pupils' work improves in line with teachers' written comments;
 - ensuring that pupils' handwriting and spelling are consistently developed through the school.(Paragraphs 2, 4, 15, 59 - 68)
- (2) Raise attainment in science by:
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge;
 - planning regular investigative work through the school;
 - having higher expectations of the more able pupils;
 - ensuring that yearly planning addresses weaknesses highlighted in the monitoring of the National Curriculum tests;
 - more rigorous monitoring to ensure planned work is covered.(Paragraphs 2, 15, 77 – 81)
- (3) Raise the quality of teaching and learning further by:
 - introducing a systematic programme of classroom monitoring;
 - highlighting weaknesses in teaching and setting individual targets for improvement;
 - highlighting weaknesses in pupils' work and setting targets for improvement;
 - creating opportunities for good practice to be shared.(Paragraphs 11, 15, 43)
- (4) Involve the governing body more in work of the school by:
 - establishing systems which enable the governing body to monitor the work of the school;
 - ensuring governors participate more in developing ideas about how the school should improve further.(Paragraph 41)

In addition to the key issues above, the following minor weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

Under-fives have too few regular opportunities for physical activity; (paragraph 56)

The school library is not catalogued and the book stock is not adequate; (paragraph 61)

Parents receive too little information to enable them to support their children at home; (paragraph 38)

Some annual reports do not clearly identify standards or how pupils can improve. (paragraph 36)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	20	34	37	7		

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)		207
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		74

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		64

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	25

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.07
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	20	15	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	17
	Girls	10	10	12
	Total	19	20	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	54 (48)	57 (61)	83 (64)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	17	15
	Girls	11	12	11
	Total	22	29	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	63 (58)	83 (52)	74 (61)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	17	7	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	5	8
	Girls	4	3	5
	Total	8	8	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	33 (33)	33 (36)	54 (64)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	8	8
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	12	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	50 (34)	54 (31)	54 (66)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	
Indian	2
Pakistani	12
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	148
Any other minority ethnic group	13

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	4	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.7
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	174.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

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

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998/9
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	£
Total income	455,734
Total expenditure	435,925
Expenditure per pupil	2,066
Balance brought forward from previous year	2,683
Balance carried forward to next year	22,492

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

207

Number of questionnaires returned

27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	30	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	33	15	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	41	14	0	4
The teaching is good.	66	30	0	4	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	63	22	11	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	8	8	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	15	7	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	59	30	7	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	56	33	7	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	44	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	42	7	7	7

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

50. Children enter the reception class in the September after their fourth birthday. There is an induction period during the last half term of the summer term during which children spend up to five afternoons, one per week, in school. This is an effective way of enabling the children and the parents to acclimatise to the ethos and routines of the class. This is particularly important as children come from a variety of pre-school experiences. The reception class is staffed with a qualified teacher and nursery nurse. All aspects of the curriculum are planned and taught jointly. A family group system ensures that the children feel secure within a small group. The quality of the provision for children under five is very good, and has been maintained since the last inspection. During the inspection, of the thirty children on roll, only ten had reached their fifth birthday.
51. The school carries out an assessment of children's language and mathematical understanding and their personal and social development during the first half term in school. This is done again at the end of the reception year. Last year, many children now in Year 1, entered school with reading and mathematical abilities below national expectations and below that of children in other schools in the Sandwell Education Authority. They made good progress in the reception class and by the end of the year their reading was still below the national average but above the local education authority average. Their mathematical ability had risen to the national average levels. This year's children entered school with average abilities below those of other children nationally. By the time they leave the reception class the majority will meet the desirable learning outcomes for children aged five. Several are already working within level 1 of the National Curriculum. A child with a statement of special educational needs is extremely well cared for by all adults involved in the reception class and makes very good progress through a stimulating programme of small targets for both social and academic aspects of the curriculum. Children with English as an additional language are provided with a structured programme of learning to support their language development.
52. Throughout the school day, the adults in the classroom are careful to develop the children's personal and social skills. The children are expected to listen to their teachers and to each other. Independence is encouraged as children get their mats to sit on for registration and hand in their "apples" or "balloons" with their names on. They tidy up, change independently for their physical education and dance lessons and are encouraged to look on a chart to find their next activity. The children respond with the social development and the independence the teachers expect of them. They generally work and play amicably alongside each other with few disputes. Their ability to work and play in full co-operation with each other is less well developed and few have the maturity to include others in their imaginative play. Many find speaking clearly and coherently and listening to adults or each other difficult. The teacher and the nursery nurse encourage the children to join in with discussions, stories and news sharing sessions. Children find it hard to wait their turn to speak. When speaking, few use whole sentences and many have a limited vocabulary. They are expected to share equipment, their time with adults and talking time. Their attitude to the child with special needs is very good. The children accept that he is part of their class and that he joins in all their activities with adult support. Children in the reception class feel secure and are happy.
53. Literacy is taught daily. The lessons follow the pattern of the literacy hour although the lessons are shorter. The organisation of these lessons is very good, with the teacher and the nursery nurse each taking half the class. Children know many of the sounds that letters make and some combined letter sounds like "ch" and "th". Almost all read their names and many read other high frequency words. All try hard to form letters correctly and all the children observed writing or colouring during the inspection held their pencils correctly. Children join in with stories enthusiastically and handle books with care. The classroom is a stimulating environment and the children enjoy reading the charts and labels around the room as one of their tasks. The hand on the stick pointer is used with care and pride. A strength of the literacy teaching is that the children have books to write in rather than a succession of worksheets. They can all see the progress they make and take pride in their work. Books made by groups of children are bound and laminated and take pride of place in the book corner. The three children with English as an additional language receive good extra support from the authority specialist teachers and make good progress in acquiring key language skills.
54. The large and interesting classroom, good use of resources, careful planning and teamwork and high expectations of the children's ability to learn combine to provide very good mathematics lessons. The

adults know the abilities of each child and the work they are expected to do is designed to extend their knowledge. For example, in a lesson about "pairs" the children were given effective and simple strategies for counting in pairs in the whole class lesson. Group work varied from sorting and counting pairs of shoes or socks within 10 to writing the numerals for pairs of dots beyond 30. By the end of the lesson a group of children playing a game of pairs had established that they could only win with even numbers. The teachers use technical vocabulary for mathematics and encourage the children to do so. Outside the classroom children develop concepts of weight, capacity and shape and space with carefully planned play activities. They set the table, order "Big Macs" from Macdonalds and bath "babies" with some care and much gusto.

55. The planned curriculum to develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the world is an exciting one. During the inspection week the teachers made ice by filling balloons with water and freezing them. Children were awed by the weight, hardness and temperature of the balls of ice; all know that as ice gets warmer it turns to water and the balls get smaller. The theme of changes was developed further as children mixed dry powder paint to make it usable and combined blue and white to change shades. They have learnt about the seasons and have made a bulb diary. Children use the "mouse" at the computer and type their names using the space bar and shift key. Commercial programmes are used to support literacy and numeracy. Every morning the date and weather is discussed and recorded. The weekly themes are reinforced in other areas of the curriculum. This week, children had an ice theme in their dance lesson, their stories were based on the theme of snow and ice and they painted with cold colours. Children talk about their homes and families, although some have trouble naming relationships correctly, confusing, for example, brothers and cousins.
56. Children cut and stick with appropriate accuracy and care. Most colour carefully and paint accurately. The majority have well-developed fine motor skills and manipulate small objects with ease. In their dance lessons all children run and find spaces. They curl up and stretch and some balance on one leg very successfully. A weakness in the provision is the lack of regular times for physical activity. The lack of large play apparatus identified at the time of the last inspection has now been rectified and there is mobile fencing to enclose an area of the playground. This equipment is rarely used except in the summer term. Although the children go outside to play they do not have regular structured outdoor physical activity to develop social skills, increase the heart rate and "blow away the cobwebs".
57. Children listen to stories and enjoy joining in with stories and rhymes. They make music with untuned percussion instruments and dance as if walking on ice with imagination and enthusiasm. Much of their creative development is through their topic work, literacy and play activities. This is carefully planned and, as with all aspects of early learning, carefully noted by the teacher and nursery nurse. The adults keep records of progress in the academic subjects and other early learning goals are assessed regularly; these assessments are used well to plan future work for the children. The teacher and adults in the class know the children very well but not all this knowledge is recorded. The team is very effective and is made even more so with regular parental help. Parents help the children choose reading books once a week and the children have regular homework to support the work in the class.
58. Although children have below average language skills, their attainment in all other areas of learning is in line with those of other children of the same age. The children have a high quality education in the reception class and make good progress. The provision for children under five is a strength of the school.

ENGLISH

59. The results of the national tests in 1999 for pupils aged seven were well below average for writing and very low for reading. The results have been well below average for the last three years. The poor reading result in 1999 indicates a drop in standards. Pupils' results for reading are well below those of similar schools and below them for writing. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment in English was well below average in 1997 and very low in 1998 and 1999. Their results were also very low when compared with pupils from similar schools. There is no significant difference in the results of boys and girls. The inspection team found that the attainment of pupils now in Year 2 is below average in writing. Attainment in reading is below average but this represents an improvement on last year's results. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 for this year's cohort of Year 6 pupils is below average for English with standards in reading being well below average. The improvement compared to last year is due mostly to the fact that half the pupils in the 1999 Year 6 were on the school's register of special educational needs. The school's provision for pupils with special needs is excellent and these pupils make very good progress. The provision for higher attaining pupils that were in place at the time of the last inspection has ceased and the school does not do enough to ensure that pupils of average and above

average ability are challenged. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are below average throughout the school.

60. Assessment of children's reading on entry to the reception class indicates that many of them have lower than average pre-reading skills. They make good progress during the reception year. Children in the present Year 1 class are still below the national levels expected at the end of reception, but in line with those of other local schools. Progress in reading is sound overall in Key Stage 1, with lower attaining pupils and those with special needs making very good progress. At the end of Key Stage 1 there is little evidence of pupils achieving the higher levels of reading. Pupils have regular shared reading groups within the Literacy Hour and lower-attaining pupils have very good support through the "ENABLE" project with the support of dedicated and skilled parents. Pupils with average or above ability do not get the support they should and the progress they make in the reception class is not maintained. Pupils' listening skills are lower than average but the teachers work hard to encourage pupils to listen carefully to adults and to each other. Pupils share texts in the Literacy Hour, but there is little evidence of the delight or hunger for reading and for books that is so much a feature of Year 2 classes. Teachers, support staff and parents work very hard to raise attainment in reading of pupils with lower abilities and special needs. However, the school does not yet have the procedures to help raise the attainment of the other pupils so it can meet its reading targets. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are below average but they are used well by teachers in the whole class teaching and plenary sessions.
61. In Key Stage 2, pupils with special needs make very good progress in reading. Extra support for literacy enables lower attaining pupils to make good progress and to develop enthusiasm for reading. This encourages them to read regularly at home and to talk about their books with enthusiasm. The attitudes to reading of the average and above average pupils vary from class to class in Key Stage 2. Pupils in the younger classes in the key stage enjoy reading, as do those in the Year 5/6 below-average literacy set. Pupils with special needs are very enthusiastic and take great pride in their progress. But Year 6 pupils who read to the inspectors were unenthusiastic, rarely read at home and had poor library skills. The weekly trips to the library ensure that all pupils have access to books but they are not able to find their own books and have to rely on the help of the librarian. The school library is unsatisfactory in the quantity and quality of books that it contains and in its lack of organisation which makes its use very difficult for pupils. There is little structure to the teaching of reading for pupils with average and above-average abilities and their progress is unsatisfactory. Teachers encourage their pupils to use reference books, CD-ROMs and the Internet to support and develop their reading. As attainment is measured at the end of the key stage, pupils are unlikely to meet the school's targets for reading.
62. Spelling is taught systematically throughout the school through the Literacy Hour. In addition, many pupils learn spellings at home. The teachers note their progress. Regular spelling tests measure performance and teachers are able to see how much their pupils have improved. Pupils have a sound knowledge of how to combine letters to make different sounds. Pupils in Key Stage 1 use these with reasonable accuracy although the "phonetically reasonable" may not be correct. For example, they may write "redeed" [ready]. Pupils acquire their spelling skills steadily throughout the school, but pupils in Year 6 have not developed the secure higher order spelling skills expected at the end of the key stage, often forgetting the rules they have learnt. Teachers have a good marking policy that is used consistently throughout the school. In some classes, however, the pupils do not follow up the informative comments and work is not corrected or completed.
63. Letter formation is carefully taught throughout Key Stage 1. By the time they are seven, most pupils have neat and well-formed writing although few use a joined script. There is a dip in the quality of writing at the beginning of Key Stage 2, but by Year 4 most is neat and accurate. Almost all pupils use a joined script. By the end of the key stage pupils' handwriting is in line with other pupils nationally.
64. The structure of the English language is taught within the Literacy Hour throughout the school. Some pupils are writing in sentences at the end of Key Stage 1 and are beginning to use commas, question marks, exclamation marks and speech marks. They use technical vocabulary like "adjective" and understand its meaning. In Year 3, pupils link sentences and substitute "and" and "then" with more interesting words. Lower-attaining pupils have very good support and make good progress. Other pupils do not have enough opportunities to write extended text or to develop their skills independently. In one lesson, for example, they were frustrated because the worksheet they were writing on did not allow them enough room to write all they wanted to. These pupils were using interesting vocabulary and their work was accurate. The expectations of what they could achieve were too low.

65. Pupils are provided with a range of texts and styles of writing throughout the school. The teachers plan the work to meet the requirements of the Literacy Strategy and there are appropriate resources to fulfil these requirements. Teachers ensure that pupils use and understand the technical vocabulary related to the structure of English. Pupils are taught to write in different tenses, for different audiences, as different characters and for different purposes. They study a variety of texts, both fiction and non-fiction and teachers endeavour to make the chosen text relevant to the rest of the curriculum. The teachers have had training in the teaching of literacy and generally have a good understanding of the requirements of the strategy. However, there is some lack of subject knowledge at the upper end of the school and pupils in a class of average and above average ability were misinformed about the structure of verbs during the inspection. The school needs to address this issue as a matter of some urgency. Older pupils with special needs receive excellent teaching. The teacher has high expectations of the progress his pupils can make. The work is challenging but achievable. He encourages his pupils to be proud of what they do and this encourages them to "give their all" to the lessons. The atmosphere of shared learning in the lesson promotes self-esteem, a love of learning and fun. Throughout the school pupils with special needs have very good support from their teachers, support staff and volunteers.
66. Teachers plan the work appropriately and ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are covered. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught in ability groups for literacy. The three teachers do not plan together and work from different years of the literacy planning. As they do not teach the same theme at the same time it makes it very difficult for pupils to move from one set to another. The quality of teaching within these three sets varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. Pupils with special needs are set challenging targets but the higher-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Joint planning, the sharing of expertise and the setting of challenging targets for higher-attaining pupils are not in place and as a result too many pupils do not make sufficient progress. The new headteacher has not yet monitored teaching and the English co-ordinator is not involved in the work of other classes although she looks at pupils' work and teachers' planning. The school is just beginning to analyse the results of the standardised tests but has not yet identified common weaknesses in the pupils' work or the progress of higher-attaining pupils. The progress of pupils with special needs is carefully monitored and their needs are very well addressed. Pupils throughout the school are set relevant homework to support their learning. All pupils in Key Stage 1 have reading diaries in which their home reading is recorded. This practice is variable in Key Stage 2.
67. Teachers have effective strategies for managing behaviour in the classroom and pupils respond well. They are generally attentive and hardworking and on occasions enthusiastic and committed to high achievement. When the teachers set time limits and share lesson targets with the pupils, the pupils respond by working at a good pace. In one excellent lesson the teaching inspired the pupils enabling them to share his delight (and fear) of the text. Their self-esteem was raised considerably as they realised that his reaction to finding himself in a tomb full of spiders would be to run! Their opinions were respected and every opportunity was used to extend the pupils' language and skills. Of the literacy lessons observed, the majority were good with one lesson being unsatisfactory; teaching is better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. In the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Year 6, the lesson lacked challenge, the teacher did not explain the task effectively and pupils were not listening as she spoke.
68. Pupils spend about half their time in school on literacy or English related work. All classes in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 visit the local library. Pupils use information technology to support the curriculum and the monthly newsletter, which is produced independently by pupils in Year 6, is of good quality. There are examples of aspects of literacy throughout the curriculum but writing skills are not systematically used in other subjects; for example in science where pupils often fill in work sheets. The pupils produce a good quantity of work and it covers an appropriate range. Effective marking enables pupils to understand how well they have done. Some understand what they have to do next. The co-ordinator and other teachers have a good understanding of the abilities of the lower-attaining pupils and those with special needs. The specific grants available for literacy have been used very effectively to support these pupils. However, the school does not have a clear strategy for pupils who do not have identified problems and some teachers are not challenging these pupils and extending their learning. This needs to be overcome in order to raise standards throughout the school. The improving standards indicated at the time of the last inspection have not been realised.

MATHEMATICS

69. In the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils in Year 2, the proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 2 and above was well below average when compared to national figures and to schools which draw their pupils from similar areas. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels was very low in comparison to the national average. Over the past three years, attainment overall has been continually below average with boys achieving slightly better than girls. In the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils in Year 6, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 and above was well below the national average and well below when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels was also well below average. There was a higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the 1998/99 Year 6 cohort and this impacted negatively on test results in the small year group. Over the past three years attainment has remained consistently below average in both key stages with girls marginally outperforming boys. Inspection evidence, discussions with pupils and attainment in the lessons observed show that levels of understanding are higher than this. Almost all pupils attain at broadly average levels and attainment has improved. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is successfully raising standards, especially in mental mathematics.
70. The recently appointed headteacher has prioritised improving learning and teaching standards; curriculum planning has been reviewed and the increasing awareness of the importance of effective on-going teacher assessment has been heightened. Booster classes, held after school, provide additional support for pupils. During these sessions learning objectives precisely identify areas of learning which need reinforcement. Setting pupils for mathematics in Years 5 and 6 has also contributed to improving standards.
71. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards are about average. Pupils in Year 1 build on the good progress made in the reception year and the majority show sound ability to calculate mentally, for example, adding tens and units. They can explain how length can be measured using standard and non-standard units, and over half of the pupils measure accurately in centimetres. In Year 2, the majority of pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of place value to fifty and understand that the position of a digit in a number gives it its value. Pupils can differentiate odd and even numbers. Year 2 pupils develop good mathematical vocabulary to describe position.
72. The rate of progress in Key Stage 2 is variable. In Year 3 pupils name shapes correctly after the teacher gives a brief description of their properties. Most pupils identify lines of symmetry in a range of shapes. Higher achieving pupils identify symmetry in letters and can explain why some letters have several lines of symmetry while other letters are not symmetrical. They classify two-dimensional shapes using reflective symmetry. A small number of pupils in this class have challenging behaviour and this affects their rates of progress. Pupils in Year 4 successfully investigate applying inverse operations to check calculations. Higher achievers challenge each other and explain their methodology. Pupils enjoy mathematics and especially look forward to the challenge of mental work. They set themselves timed targets and are excited when those targets are beaten. Combined classes of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils enable the formation of a third class for mathematics. Numeracy classes are set according to ability. Smaller numbers of pupils enable teachers to give more support to low achievers while providing opportunities for accelerating progress with the remainder. These arrangements are supporting learning well and are raising standards successfully. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress throughout the school because the adult support they receive links their learning carefully to specific needs. The progress of pupils in Year 5 is good but for a significant number of Year 6 pupils, this good progress is not maintained at the same rate because the quality of teaching, while satisfactory, is not as good as in other year groups. A weakness in attainment in both key stages is the limited range of opportunities for investigative mathematics that restricts the opportunities pupils have to apply the mathematics they have learnt in the classroom to real life situations. This is a reason why progress over time is not as good as progress in lessons. Learning is not sufficiently consolidated for pupils to independently apply their skills and knowledge and make important decisions within problem solving tasks.
73. The quality of teaching was at least good in over sixty per cent of lessons observed; teaching was consistently good in Key Stage 1 and very good in Years 1 and 4. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Teaching objectives are made clear to pupils. In the most effective lessons the pace is brisk with teachers having high expectations of pupils' learning. The level of attention pupils give to teachers is high. Overall, the standard of behaviour is very good and pupils work well individually and in groups.

74. Where teaching is no more than satisfactory, teachers' expectations are not as high and teachers' subject knowledge is less confident. Teachers show respect for their pupils and this is reciprocated by pupils. This creates a very good climate for teaching and learning. Pupils are considerate of each other's feelings and readily give support to members of the class who experience difficulty understanding a teaching point. The use of rewards for good work has a good effect upon pupils' attitudes. The quality of teachers' questioning is high with targeted questions posed at appropriate levels of pupils' learning. Teachers plan their work carefully and take good account of pupils' responses. These day to day assessment procedures help to inform planning programmes of work. The marking policy is having a positive influence on standards because it highlights pupils' successes and areas that need further improvement. However, this practice is not consistently applied. The setting of homework is satisfactory and supports classroom learning.
75. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills in other curriculum areas include pupils in Year 5 carefully measuring the rate of evaporation of water in science experiments and pupils, in design and technology, gathering data to make comparisons. However, these links are not systematically made across a broader range of subjects to secure the application of knowledge in a wider range of situations. Resources for mathematics are good but are not used effectively in the development of pupils' investigational skills in the upper school.

SCIENCE

76. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for 11-year-olds, pupils' attainment was well below the national average and below average when compared with similar schools. However, over half of the pupils in this cohort were on the special educational needs register. Results over the last three years have shown a decline and the present cohort of Year 6 pupils is still making unsatisfactory progress and has attainment that is well below average. In the 1999 teacher assessments for seven-year-olds, attainment was well below the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment is higher in the present Year 2 cohort but it is still below average.
77. By the age of 11, pupils have poorly developed skills and knowledge in all aspects of the subject. They do not have a clear understanding of a fair test and this was clearly indicated in their investigational approach to finding how much force was needed to move an object across different surfaces. Pupils have unsatisfactory knowledge of living processes and materials. They have some knowledge of forces but do not use this knowledge effectively in investigations. None of the pupils interviewed were able to explain why a light bulb lit up when joined to a battery. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their scientific knowledge in practical situations with too much of their knowledge coming from books and not enough from pupils' own investigations.
78. Pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in Key Stage 1. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 build satisfactorily on the good work in Reception. However, investigation work is still not at the centre of pupils' science work and, as a result, pupils do not have opportunities to use equipment and discuss their findings. This was aptly summed up by a Year 2 pupil when she said, "when you have things it's real and you see things happen". Pupils in Year 1 have a good understanding of reflective materials and know that these materials need a light source to make them work. They relate this knowledge well to the reflective strips on their school bags and to the coat worn by the visiting road safety officer. Year 2 pupils have a sound understanding of living processes and know the several functions that plant roots perform. However, pupils have very limited knowledge of materials and of the physical processes. Progress increases in Year 3 and pupils develop a good knowledge of healthy foods and the importance of different types of teeth. They have a satisfactory knowledge of different materials and use this knowledge appropriately in their absorbency investigation. Year 4 are developing satisfactory investigation skills but do not use their scientific knowledge satisfactorily when there is an over-reliance on worksheets or pupils do not have opportunities to explain the findings of their investigations. Pupils' understanding of most aspects of this subject is well below average. Pupils' learning increases in Year 5 when investigative work becomes the main vehicle for pupils' learning. This was clearly shown in pupils' investigation into evaporation and resulted in good gains in knowledge and understanding for pupils of all abilities, with higher attaining pupils talking of "water evaporating into the atmosphere" and lower attaining pupils describing the process as "water evaporating into invisible rain".
79. Pupils' attitudes to science are good overall and sometimes very good when pupils are involved in practical investigations. Pupils collaborate well, such as in the Year 1 and Year 5 classes, listening well to each other and building well on each other's suggestions. However, this was not the case in the Year 6 class when pupils did not have enough subject knowledge to approach the investigation successfully and

as a result some became frustrated with their lack of progress. Pupils are generally attentive, listen and relate well to their teachers; for example Year 2 pupils make good gains in their learning through discussion and questioning about weeds they had brought into the classroom from the playground. Behaviour in all lessons is generally good and very good when pupils are totally involved in their practical work. The presentation in pupils' books is very variable. Pupils' presentation skills are good in Year 3 but deteriorate in Years 4 and 6, where pupils' writing and drawing is often untidy and careless.

80. Teaching is good in Key Stage 1, unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2 and overall ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Teachers' planning is good and there is a clear understanding of what pupils are to learn in a lesson. Where learning is most effective, such as in Year 5, these learning objectives are shared with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson and pupils focus well and work hard towards achieving these goals. There has not been a history of regular investigation work in the school but the recent change to the government guidelines is resulting in more opportunities for pupils in this area. However, many of the pupils do not at present have the necessary skills and knowledge to approach this type of work and some teachers also do not have the necessary subject knowledge to support pupils appropriately in this work. This was the principal reason why the investigation in Year 6 on forces was not a valuable learning experience for the majority of the pupils. Most teachers use questioning well to develop pupils' knowledge and assess their level of understanding. This was particularly the case when Year 1 pupils were investigating reflective materials. The very focused and knowledgeable questioning by the teacher led to these pupils having a very good understanding of what conditions are necessary for materials to reflect light. Whilst pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in the majority of lessons, higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged when there is an over-reliance on worksheets and pupils of all abilities complete the same work. For example, higher-attaining Year 4 pupils did not use their scientific knowledge well when dividing different organisms into similar groups. Teachers manage pupils well and, in the lessons observed, the good relationships enabled constructive dialogue and opportunities for pupils to share their knowledge. Teachers have good pace to their lesson and the use of time limits, such as in the Year 5 class, leads to pupils concentrating well and working hard. Teachers assess pupils' work satisfactorily and use this knowledge well in the planning of future work. This was clearly evident in the Year 4 class, when the teacher set more demanding work in the follow-up lesson to challenge the higher-attaining pupils. There is clear evidence that teachers' marking has improved as a result of the new school initiative but in Year 3 and Year 4, teachers do not give a clear indication of what pupils have to do to improve.
81. The school has adopted the government guidelines for the subject and this has, on paper, addressed the lack of emphasis on science investigations. Teachers are working hard to increase the amount of practical work but, at present, there are no opportunities for the science co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning in the classroom and to give support where needed. Whilst the amount of time given to the science curriculum is average, some planned lessons are too short for pupils to successfully complete their work. For example, there was not enough time for the Year 6 teacher to share pupils' work in her lesson on forces and, as a result, the lesson ended with many pupils being confused. Standards of science in the last inspection were below average and the previous curriculum did not help to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding. The present curriculum provides for a clear development of pupils' skills and knowledge through the years but not all teachers are developing pupils' knowledge through the use of extension activities. For example, pupils in Year 2 were assessed as understanding a circuit, not in a practical situation but by use of a written test and have no practical opportunities to develop their understanding of circuits, such as through the use of switches. The monitoring of the curriculum planning is unsatisfactory at present, as it does not ensure that all planned activities for the term are carried out. The introduction of assessments set by the co-ordinator is a good initiative that will give a clear indication of pupils' progress at the end of each half-term and will also enable the co-ordinator to compare the attainment of different year cohorts. The analysis of National Curriculum tests and the non-statutory Year 3, 4 and 5 assessments, is thorough but information from this analysis does not, at present, feed back into teachers' long and medium term planning. As a result, weaknesses are not being systematically addressed.

ART

82. During the inspection three lessons were observed. Judgements are based on these lessons, the scrutiny of pupils' work and the large number of displays around the school. The standard of art in the school is good with pupils making good progress as they move through the years. Much of this good progress is due to the enthusiasm of the teachers, the well-planned curriculum and the wide range of opportunities that pupils have to work with different materials.
83. Pupils have a natural enthusiasm for the subject and this is well nurtured by the teachers. Through the school pupils are introduced to a wide range of media, including paint, pencil, pastel, clay and fabric. These are introduced to the pupils in innovative ways, such as when younger pupils make large material weavings for their "hot and cold colours" display. Pupils handle pencils confidently and develop good drawing skills in Key Stage 1. This was clearly shown in Year 2 pupils' sketches of different types of roof designs. By the age of 11, pupils have well-developed drawing skills, clearly shown in their still life work on musical instruments and the drawing of bananas which linked with their St. Lucia topic. These showed a good appreciation of tone and line, using pencil, charcoal and pastel. Pupils in Year 4 make good progress, particularly in their still-life drawing of bottles and tins, which showed sensitive handling of light and shade. Pupils' painting skills develop well in Key Stage 1 but because pupils do not mix their own paints, the subtleties of tone that is often a feature of Key Stage 2 work is not present to the same degree. However, pupils do use bright colours most effectively in their displays. This is particularly evident in the printing competition, which the school has recently organised. Particularly impressive were the Year 2 printed portraits and the very carefully constructed printed blocks of Year 5 pupils which show a good understanding of the use of contrasting colours and the importance of discipline to ensure symmetry in the finished product. Pupils take great care with the quality of their finished products and this was clearly illustrated by the attention to detail shown in the papier-mâché animal money-boxes made by Year 4 pupils.
84. Teaching of art is good with teachers having good subject knowledge that leads to the clear development of pupils' skills through the school. There are some good examples of real challenge in some lessons; for example, in a Year 6 drawing lesson, one higher-attaining pupil was set a very demanding task that resulted in a wonderful sketch of a pineapple.
85. The high standards that were reported in the last inspection report have been continued and the experienced co-ordinator has carefully re-designed the curriculum to take account of the cut in time for the teaching of the subject. Pupils' self-esteem in the subject is enhanced by the way in which pupils' work is displayed and valued. This is particularly evident in the recent school printing competition. Pupils are also encouraged by the way in which teachers promote art within their classroom. Outstanding in this instance is the environment that has been created in the Year 5 classroom by the careful mounting and display of pupils' art work. However, not all classrooms offer such a rich environment as some teachers do not have the same skills to display pupils' work. At present the co-ordinator does not have time to observe teaching and learning in the classroom nor to work alongside teachers to help develop their skills. This variation in teachers' skills leads to a variation in the progress that pupils make as they move through the classes. The initiative of the "whole-class venture boards" is popular with pupils and encourages them to share their skills and to work in a co-operative way on a large-scale picture. Whilst there is no formal recording of pupils' skills, teachers are helped in their planning by the school's portfolio of work and the work in pupils' individual sketchbooks.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

86. Standards in design and technology have been maintained since the last inspection and are satisfactory throughout the school.
87. Pupils in Year 1 produce good quality designs of their ideas to construct a moving picture from a fairy tale. Their drawings are neat and represent clearly the scenes that they have chosen. They are developing and improving their skills using glue and card and are aware of a range of tools to cut materials including scissors which they use carefully and with purpose. Sticky tape is widely favoured as a means of building up their pictures. They take care to assemble the parts of their design and with help they use elementary construction skills to complete their pictures.
88. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have appropriate understanding of the design process and can evaluate outcomes and clarify their design ideas using drawings and through discussion. In Year 5 pupils design and construct a toy using a cam. Pupils are able to choose the structure mechanism they use. They

understand that cars provide linear motion and describe their functions in their models. Pupils enjoy design and technology lessons. They bubble with excitement and are rarely off task. They work effectively individually and with partners, showing interest and a willingness to learn new skills. Higher achievers are beginning to show the ability to work independently. These good learning experiences are the result of good teaching.

89. The teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned, have good pace and provide appropriate challenge to pupils, including those with special educational needs. Planning of lessons includes opportunities for the assessment of pupils' work. Although teachers are always available to support pupils, pupils are encouraged to think out solutions when problems arise. Praise for good effort and manners rewards pupils and is an important component of good teaching practice. These qualities impact strongly on pupils' learning. Health and safety considerations are reinforced as teachers remind pupils of potential dangers, for example, when carrying sharp instruments in a busy classroom. A minor weakness in Year 6 is the lack of challenge to maintain the pace of learning evident in other year groups. The subject is well managed with the co-ordinator providing good support to staff and leading by example. Progress within the time allocation given to design and technology is good.

GEOGRAPHY

90. Standards in geography are about average for pupils aged seven and eleven. In the previous inspection standards were similar. The teaching of geography is blocked. This is a staff decision to avoid fragmentation of the subject. Care is taken to maintain the integrity of the subject and teachers are vigilant to maintain continuity in the development of pupils' geographical skills.
91. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils explain how maps help to make sense of position in the environment. They are familiar with basic maps of the area where they live and the majority of pupils describe and sketch the routes they take to school. They know that roads have names and that choosing the best route between locations needs careful consideration. Road safety issues within the local area are discussed in detail and this has raised questions about the parking practices on roads near to the school. Year 2 pupils recently surveyed nearby roads and discovered that many cars were parked on double yellow lines. A road safety officer was asked to attend the school to note the anxiety of the pupils. As a result the pupils will be writing to parents asking for their co-operation to discourage motorists from parking without due care and attention. This provides an opportunity for links to flourish between geography, practical problems and the development of literacy skills.
92. At Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 3 extend their skills in map work. A range of good quality aerial photographs provides opportunities for pupils to identify features in the local area. They understand that the position from which a photograph is taken greatly influences the perspective of what can be seen. Pupils show curiosity and this is reflected in a wide range of observations which noted a different and often new view of a familiar feature. Pupils in Year 5 compare life in Kenya with life in Cradley Heath. They discuss similarities and differences in housing, education and how young people help at home. There are very good connections made with spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Worthwhile discussions reinforced the importance of the family structure in rural Kenya with the emphasis placed on working together to achieve an improved quality life. The need to work together was especially evident when pupils considered how young people undertake responsibility for the care of families' animals that provide an important source of food. Pupils understand the importance of water and how that affects the quality of people's lives in hot climates. The changing nature of life in the cities of Kenya enabled pupils to comment that life in Nairobi and Cradley Heath had many similarities. For example, pupils noted how children in the city relied upon the car for transport to attend school and that many of the demands made upon pupils in both locations are similar.
93. Only two lessons were observed. In one lesson the quality of teaching was very good. In that lesson, the teacher reviewed previous learning through a vigorous question and answer session that immediately engaged pupils' imaginations. The teacher had high expectations of pupils and this transferred and encouraged them to respond very positively. Social issues emerged and were discussed when pupils considered how they help at home. The lesson was well planned and the provision of good quality resources promoted high quality learning experiences for pupils. The assessment of pupils' progress forms part of short-term planning and is of good quality. The parent helper was sensibly deployed to support pupils.
94. Pupils enjoy geography. They are eager to engage in decisions about their environment and are excited when they feel they can influence decisions about the way people behave in their town. Comparing places

far away from Cradley Heath exploits their curiosity and provides opportunities to make comparisons between life styles. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well. The subject is well managed.

HISTORY

95. During the period of the inspection no history lessons were observed. Judgements about standards have been made through discussions and interviews with pupils and teachers, a review of documentation, teachers' plans and the sampling of recorded work in pupils' books and on display. At the end of both key stages, standards in history are in line with those expected of pupils of the same age; in the previous inspection, standards were similar.
96. History is taught in blocked time. The staff reached this decision to avoid fragmentation of the subject during a period when the school's priority was to improve standards in English, mathematics and science. The level of subject maintenance has been appropriate and complies with the national guidance which schools have received. A revised school development plan for the current academic year identifies history as a priority. The policy is to be reviewed and the scheme of work updated in the light of the government guidelines and Curriculum 2000.
97. Discussions with pupils in Year 2 revealed that they have made good gains from their work comparing modern toys with those made over a hundred years ago. They understand that an important difference in toys is the materials from which they are made and that modern toys are often powered by electric motors. All pupils expressed preferences for modern toys but agreed that older versions enabled them to be aware of the toys children played with years ago. Pupils made some knowledgeable comparisons between modern school life and education during Victorian days. They were especially interested in the form of punishment practised during the nineteenth century. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 discussed Britain since 1930. Much interest was generated about events leading up to and during the Second World War. One pupil proudly displayed artefacts related to his grandfather's war service. Items included a soldier's service book and a newspaper article celebrating the return to port of the aircraft carrier upon which his grandfather served. They were recognised as important sources of evidence. Pupils have a good knowledge of how household goods have changed during the last century. They describe the importance of a range of inventions that have improved the lives of many people during periods of history and give accurate descriptions of the nature of those changes.
98. Pupils enjoy the research opportunities the study of history provides. Their work relies upon good quality reference books and increasingly, access to computer technology using appropriate CD-ROMs. Research work makes valuable contributions to the attractive and informative displays currently in the school.
99. The subject is well led. The co-ordinator is slowly building up a collection of good quality artefacts to promote learning and teaching. Visitors to the school are encouraged. For example, visiting groups dressed as Vikings and Romans have provided very interesting and popular extensions of learning experiences in history.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

100. Standards in information and communications technology [ICT] have improved since the last inspection and pupils now achieve national curriculum expectations for their age. Each class now has its own computer and while there are still insufficient computers to teach the subject really effectively, this provision has enabled pupils to have regular access to the hardware. The pupils are keen to develop their skills and even the youngest remain on task at the screen. Some classes do not have a fixed time during the week to teach ICT. This is a weakness and the teachers need to develop strategies to teach, for example, keyboard skills and control technology that do not need computer access.
101. Only one full lesson was observed in Key Stage 2 during the week of the inspection, but part of another lesson was observed in Key Stage 1. Inspectors noted the use of computers during the week and other evidence was obtained through an analysis of pupils' work and discussion with pupils. Pupils in Key Stage 1 use a paint program to draw and fill pictures. They change colour and line thickness. They have designed and printed an insert for a Christmas card. All use the keyboard and mouse and use modelling to select options in programs to support literacy and numeracy. In Year 2, pupils use the floor robot, the "Roamer", programming it to travel to one another within a circle.

102. Throughout Key Stage 2 pupils continue to use software to support literacy and numeracy. They use CD-ROMs to support their learning and for research for other subjects. Years 5 and 6 have access to the Internet and know how to find relevant information. They work independently and with confidence loading, using and printing their work. Some have used a database to store and retrieve data although they have not yet amended information or used spreadsheets with variables. Year 6 pupils program the computer to repeat actions to draw regular shapes and patterns with "Logo". A strength of their work is the desktop publishing of the school newsletter that is produced monthly by three pupils. The whole class has a turn and they work independently with information provided by the headteacher and other members of the school community. They combine text and graphics, change borders, size and fonts and produce a professional looking document. Pupils use remote devices like controlling the video recorder regularly but do not have opportunities to use sensory devices or electronic measurement. Neither are there any facilities for using ICT to create music. Keyboard skills are generally limited to two finger typing and word processing is slow.
103. Pupils with special educational needs use computers regularly to support their learning and receive good support from both adults and peers.
104. The small amount of teaching observed during the inspection was sound and teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject. In other lessons computers were used by individual pupils or pairs. Teachers and other adults provided appropriate support. All have sufficient expertise to help the pupils. The new co-ordinator has a clear vision of the development of the subject. She is confident and has had training to support ICT. She has carried out an audit of planning and resources to identify areas for development and the subject is a priority for school development. Resources are still unsatisfactory due to the high ratio of pupils to computers, but there is appropriate software to support the curriculum. Too little time is allocated to the subject and it lacks structured planning for developing the use of ICT to support other subjects.

MUSIC

105. The provision for music has improved since the last inspection and standards are similar to those expected of pupils of similar ages. The new headteacher has responsibility for music and teaches music alongside some teachers. A commercial scheme for music is being adapted to suit the school and is effective in empowering non-specialist teachers to teach music. A pianist accompanies singing and teaches recorders while the local authority peripatetic music service provides four hours a week for class and instrumental teaching. Eight pupils learn the clarinet or flute. The planning for this input is highly structured and the service is seen as an in-service training programme for the class teachers involved. This, combined with the headteacher's support, has given teachers the confidence to extend the pupils' music beyond singing. The provision and standards are now sound.
106. Pupils sing tunefully and with enthusiasm throughout the school. They are normally on task with the majority singing during assemblies and singing lessons in the hall. Commitment to the music deteriorates when there is a lack of pace in the lessons. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 listen to and respond to music, comparing purpose and style. In Year 4, they identify beat and understand the difference between "beat" and "rhythm". They clap the beat accurately and conduct their peers. In Year 6, pupils plan a piece of programmatic music using timbre, dynamics and tempo to match their music to the theme.
107. All the music teaching observed during the inspection was at least sound and most was good. All teachers, including the peripatetic teacher have effective management and good relationships with the pupils. Lessons are fun. The pupils respond with enthusiasm and behave well. The sound teaching was a feature of the singing sessions in the hall that were enjoyable but involved little new learning.
108. Resources are generally sound but there is little recorded music from other cultures. The choir and recorder groups make a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development, as does the major annual production. Pupils with special needs are fully integrated into the lesson and supported when appropriate.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

109. Standards in physical education are similar to those expected of pupils of a similar age at both key stages. In the previous inspection standards were similar.

110. At Key Stage 1, pupils show independence when assembling apparatus. They demonstrate good skills moving on mats using forward rolls, with higher-achieving pupils experimenting with cartwheels. Pupils employ varied techniques as they progress along benches. Good links with mathematics are reinforced as pupils move anti-clockwise and make high quality dismounts using 180 degree turns. Pupils are confident when they respond to challenges on climbing frames. Good quality sequences involving four or five movements are developed by higher-achieving pupils.
111. At Key Stage 2 pupils enjoy dance. They are enthusiastic and practise conscientiously with pupils working hard together to sequence movements which correspond to the rhythm of music. Higher-achieving pupils are sufficiently challenged through extension activities designed to measure and extend their skills. Many pupils show good control in their movements and often achieve at above average levels in this element of physical education.
112. The standard of swimming in the school is above average with almost all Year 6 pupils able to swim at least 25 metres before they leave school. They are enthusiastic and this is reflected in the speed with which they change for swimming. Pupils are grouped according to ability with beginners receiving encouragement in the learners' pool to develop confidence in water. In the main pool, swimmers receive good support to improve their swimming techniques. Instructors observe pupils' performance and suggest ways in which their efforts can become more effective. Pupils' progress is recorded and measured using an appropriate skills checklist.
113. The quality of teaching is good overall with examples of very good teaching. Teachers place strong emphasis on safety procedures when pupils use apparatus. They have good subject knowledge that they use well to provide pupils with a range of challenging activities. Lessons are well planned. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that pupils' progress does not slow in dance lessons when they spend too much time listening and watching. In swimming, the good relationships between adults and pupils promote confidence in water and this contributes to improved performances. Lessons have good pace with teachers having high expectations of pupils to improve.
114. The school does not benefit from a sports field and this is a weakness in the provision for games. However, football practice organised by a parent takes place regularly and members of a nearby professional football team provide additional coaching support. The subject is well led and managed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

115. Standards in religious education are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for pupils aged seven and eleven. Standards have improved since the previous inspection when religious education did not meet statutory requirements and was a key issue for action. The subject is now well led. The co-ordinator monitors planning and reviews pupils' work. Planning covers both coverage and assessment of the progress pupils make. There is, at present, no monitoring of teaching and learning.
116. Pupils have a good understanding of Christian beliefs and values as well as other world faiths. Stories from the Bible are used effectively to highlight moral and social issues as well as to enable pupils to get a better insight and understanding of the life of Jesus Christ. Pupils understand the differences between the Old and New Testaments. They are able to compare creation stories from different parts of the world. Knowledge and understanding of religious practices, such as prayer and worship in Christianity, are compared and contrasted well with that of other world faiths such as Islam. Pupils are knowledgeable and understand the significance of important features of church buildings in other religions as well as of those in the Christian faith. They are aware of the significance of the position of religious buildings, for example Christian churches face east, while Islamic mosques face Mecca.
117. Pupils enjoy religious education. They listen attentively to their teachers. They are keen to join in discussions and ask focused questions which increase their learning. Pupils show respect towards the beliefs and values expressed in different religions and the religious practices followed by different groups. Pupils recognise similarities and differences in the Christian and Islamic faiths. For example, they were surprised to learn that males in the Christian faith bare their heads in church as a mark of respect, while in the Islamic faith heads are covered on entry to the mosque. They work well individually and with partners sharing materials sensibly.
118. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory overall. Visitors to the school, for example, the community vicar and a representative from the local mosque enhanced the quality of teaching during the inspection period. Lessons are well prepared, objectives are

made clear to pupils and lessons maintain a brisk pace. Good opportunities are made for questioning which enables pupils to reflect and clarify their understanding. Good relationships feature strongly with church leaders. The vicar, who was a governor of the school, is a regular visitor and contributes to lively assemblies. Prominent members of the local mosque make valuable contributions to the development of pupils' deeper understanding.