

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Walsall, West Midlands

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104233

Headteacher: Mr A V Brennan

Reporting inspector: Ian Nelson
2220

Dates of inspection: 2nd - 5th July 2001

Inspection number: 194070

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Blue Lane East
Walsall

Postcode: West Midlands
WS2 8HN

Telephone number: 01922 720063

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Rev. Fr. John Harrington

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2220	Ian Nelson	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
1329	Kevern Oliver	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? Partnership with parents
1189	Sharon Brown	Team inspector	English Music Equality of opportunity Special educational needs English as an additional language	
27592	Barry Duckett	Team inspector	Maths Physical education	
22805	Jo Greer	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Design and technology	
21816	Beryl Thomas	Team inspector	Geography History	How good are curricular and other opportunities?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number on roll	243	(About average size)
Pupils entitled to free school meals	21%	(Slightly above average)
Pupils with English as an additional language	2%	(Higher than most schools)
Pupils on the register of special educational needs	18%	(Below average)

This is a Roman Catholic primary school drawing its pupils mainly from the local area where there is a high proportion of rented accommodation and privately owned terraced housing. Unemployment in the area is high, with some significant social deprivation. Only a small proportion of pupils come from advantaged backgrounds. There are few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. Attainment on entry is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Most pupils receive a satisfactory education, although a minority of brighter pupils are not stretched enough and do not achieve as well as they might. Current standards are below the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school is very effective in ensuring good behaviour and manners from pupils. While teaching is satisfactory overall, it is inconsistent, so that pupils make faster progress in some classes than in others. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Provision for social and moral development is very good, leading to pupils who are very well behaved and have very good attitudes to learning.
- Teaching at the Foundation Stage and at the end of Key Stage 2 is good.
- Standards in art, geography and history are good at the end of Key Stage 2.
- There are good links with parents, who have very positive views of the school.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly of higher attaining pupils, at both key stages.
- Teaching at Year 1.
- Levels of attendance and punctuality.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997. Since then it has made a number of improvements including introducing performance management for teachers, revising schemes of work, better assessment procedures for English, mathematics and science, developing systems for tracking the progress pupils make throughout school, and monitoring teaching and learning. It has also addressed the key issues from the previous report, improving standards in music, ensuring that information and communication technology (ICT) is included in other subjects, maintaining the good standards of behaviour and going some way to addressing the issue of boys attaining poorer standards than girls, although this issue has not been fully resolved. Overall, therefore, the school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

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	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	C	B	C	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	C	B	D	C	
Science	C	C	D	C	

The table shows that in last year's national tests the eleven-year-olds attained standards that matched the national average in English, while in mathematics and science standards were below average. In comparison with pupils in similar schools, standards in English were above average, while those in mathematics and science were in line. The standards attained by the girls since the last inspection have risen in all three subjects. The standards attained by the boys have fluctuated over that time and were no better in the 2000 tests than at the time of the last inspection. Overall standards have not risen as fast as standards nationally. Standards at Key Stage 1 were well below the national average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing in the 2000 tests. Since the last inspection standards have been consistently below average in reading, and have fluctuated from average to well below national averages in writing and mathematics. The 2001 test results for Key Stage 2 show that the school was around 9% below the targets it had set itself for English and mathematics.

Inspection findings are that current standards in English, mathematics and science are below average at the end of both key stages. Standards in art and design, history and geography at the end of Key Stage 2 are better than usual for the age-group. Standards in design and technology (DT), ICT, music, and physical education (PE) are in line with those expected by the end of both key stages. Pupils enter the nursery with below average attainment, make good progress through the Foundation Stage and enter Key Stage 1 only a little below the expected levels. Progress at Year 1 is unsatisfactory, however, and although pupils make satisfactory progress at Year 2 this is not enough to enable them to attain average standards by the end of the key stage. Progress at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall but is faster towards the end of the key stage than at Year 3. While most pupils achieve the standards of which they are capable, the more able pupils and some boys do not. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make satisfactory progress towards the targets they are set.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their lessons, although boys generally are more enthusiastic about practical work than they are about reading and writing tasks.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well in lessons, around the school and out on visits. They are very polite and well mannered with each other and with adults.

Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils get on very well with each other and with the adults they work with.
Attendance	Attendance is below average and too many children arrive late for school in the mornings.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Although much of the teaching seen during the inspection was good, a scrutiny of the pupils' work shows that this standard is not consistently maintained and overall teaching is judged to be satisfactory. During the inspection 96% of the teaching was satisfactory or better, with 22% being very good or excellent and 42% good. Only 4% of lessons seen were unsatisfactory. Teaching at the Foundation Stage is mainly good so that children progress well. Work is well planned through a series of appropriate activities which the children enjoy. Teaching at Year 1 is unsatisfactory and pupils do not make enough progress. Consequently, although teaching at Year 2 is satisfactory, and some of it is good, the pupils do not make enough progress over Key Stage 1 and achieve less than they should. Teaching at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall, although it gets better at Years 5 and 6, so that pupils' progress accelerates in these classes. This is partly because of specialist teaching of subjects in Years 5 and 6. Teachers plan their lessons well, although not always well enough to extend the more able pupils. Although boys are fully involved in practical activities they are less interested in reading, writing and discussion tasks, and teachers rely on girls to drive these parts of their lessons. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily, although some more able pupils could cope with harder work. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards the targets they have been set. The very best lessons observed were special events, including the use of outside experts, who held the attention of the class, used resources very effectively and constantly reinforced learning through effective questioning. Consequently pupils were attentive, keen to listen and take part and get involved in the planned activities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school teaches all subjects and plans a good balance between them. It fully meets statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory support for pupils with special educational needs so that they make sound progress towards their targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school provides satisfactory opportunities for the spiritual and cultural development of pupils. It makes very good provision for their social and moral development, encouraging and promoting good behaviour and manners at all times.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. The school has many effective systems in place for the care and support of pupils. Some health and safety issues have, however, been drawn to the attention of governors for their action.
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The school has established good links with parents, providing a good range of information for them about the school. This has led to parents having very positive views of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. While the head and senior staff have identified priorities for improvement they have not tackled some of the most difficult obstacles.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory as yet. Although all governors are very committed and hardworking, several have been recently appointed and have not yet gained the confidence and expertise they need. They rely too heavily on school staff for information and advice.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has satisfactory, though recently introduced, systems in place to evaluate how well it is doing, but some staff are reluctant to challenge current ways of working and consider options they have not tried.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The governors and head ensure that the budget is managed to meet the school's identified priorities.

The school has enough suitably qualified teaching and non-teaching staff. There is enough accommodation and resources are adequate in all subjects except music, where more are required. The school is well resourced for art and design. The headteacher and governors understand the need to obtain the best value rather than the lowest price when making decisions on spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible • Behaviour in school is good • Children are expected to work hard and do their best • Their children are making good progress in school 	There were no issues where a significant proportion of parents expressed concern.

The inspectors endorse the parents' views about what pleases them about the school except that the children, for the most part, are making satisfactory rather than good progress through the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Children enter the nursery with attainment overall below the level to be expected for their age, particularly in language, numeracy and social skills. Many are very immature for their age and have a limited knowledge of the world beyond their immediate environment. They generally make good progress through the Foundation Stage so that by the time they enter Key Stage 1 many are close to the expected level for their age and achieve the Early Learning Goals.

2 The 2000 national tests for seven-year-olds show that pupils were well below average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. When compared with pupils in similar schools the pupils were below average in reading, average in writing and well below average in mathematics. No pupils attained the higher than expected level 3 in writing and mathematics and few did so in reading. Standards in reading have been consistently below or well below average over the last four years while standards in writing have been below or well below average for three of the last four years. Reading standards are broadly the same as at the last inspection and writing standards showed a slight improvement since then. Standards in mathematics have fluctuated between being average and well below average over the last four years and in 2000 were slightly below those at the time of the last inspection. The 2001 test results show that overall standards in reading have declined while those in mathematics and writing have risen since last year. An analysis by gender of the 2001 test results shows that both boys and girls have gone down in their reading scores compared with the previous year. Girls improved their writing more than boys did and boys improved their mathematics more than girls did.

3 The 2000 national tests for eleven-year-olds show standards in English were average compared with all schools, and below average in mathematics and science. When compared with schools with similar pupils, results were above average in English and average in mathematics and science. Below average numbers of pupils gained the higher than expected level 5 in all three subjects. Trends show that standards have been average in English for three of the last four years and above average in the fourth year. Boys' results in English were around the same in 2000 as they were at the time of the last inspection while in mathematics and science they were below the levels attained then. Girls improved their results in all three subjects over the same period. Overall standards are not rising as fast as standards nationally in recent years. The 2001 test results show that they have declined in English and mathematics since last year, most notably in the reading of the girls. Girls did better than boys in both subjects. The proportions of pupils gaining the higher level 5 in both subjects was lower than last year, with a substantial increase in the proportions failing to reach the expected level 4. The school had predicted a slight decline in standards of these pupils compared with the previous year but failed to meet its own targets by around 9%. Too few more able pupils are being extended sufficiently to achieve the standards of which they are capable.

4 Most pupils with special educational needs achieve standards appropriate for their ability. In mathematics, however, early number concepts are not always fully understood, particularly number facts, sequences, patterns and relationships. In English progress is limited for some pupils.

5 The inspection findings show that standards currently are below average in English, mathematics and science at the end of both key stages. This is because of the inconsistency of teaching through the school, the lack of progress made by pupils in Year 1 and a lack of

emphasis on challenging the most able pupils. Standards in speaking and listening are below average at the end of both key stages. This is an area in which children are weak when they enter the nursery and, although they make sound progress overall, they remain below average. Although most listen attentively to their teachers many remain passive during discussion or question and answer sessions and not all teachers provide enough opportunities for them to grow in confidence in this area. For much of the time pupils respond to questioning with one-word replies and they have little opportunity to develop speaking and listening through structured sessions involving drama, discussion or debate.

6 Reading is below average at the end of both key stages. Although the highest attaining pupils at Key Stage 1 read at an appropriate standard, and some exceed this level, too many read hesitantly and are not sure how to tackle words they do not know. The best readers at Key Stage 2 read fluently and with expression and talk about their favourite authors and books. Lower attaining pupils are not very interested in reading and lack the skills to enjoy it. Older pupils at Key Stage 2 do not keep reading records or read regularly to their teachers. Consequently they do not get enough guidance on how to improve their reading.

7 Writing is below average at the end of both key stages. At Year 1 too much work is confined to completing worksheets which do not help pupils to develop their writing. This improves at Year 2 where pupils produce a variety of writing including, letters, stories and descriptions. Spelling is weak, however, as pupils lack the knowledge they need to be able to build words. At Key Stage 2 very few pupils produce above average quality writing. At its best, writing is good and includes a good range of vocabulary to capture the mood of the story or the use of persuasive words when writing a brochure for a theme park. Too often, though, writing is confined to worksheets rather than allowing pupils to write at length. Spelling remains a weakness.

8 Standards in mathematics are below average at the end of both key stages. By the time they are seven many pupils are beginning to understand the value of each digit in a two-digit number, recognise odd and even numbers and some can double and halve numbers. They know the names of some common shapes but are less clear about properties, such as the numbers of sides or faces they have. By the time they are eleven many pupils still use their fingers when working out problems in their heads. Higher attaining pupils identify different types of angles and know a wide range of shapes and their properties. They know about prime and square numbers. Too many pupils lack a secure knowledge of tables and other number facts, however.

9 Standards in science are below average at the end of both key stages because too few pupils gain the higher than expected levels to balance the numbers who fail to reach the expected levels. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils enjoy exploring electrical circuits and making bulbs light up by completing the circuit. This emphasis on practical work also appeals to the eleven-year-olds as they experiment with materials and choose the best for making a parachute or blackout curtains.

10 Standards in ICT, design and technology, music and physical education are in line with nationally expected levels at both key stages. Standards in art and design, history and geography are better than average at the end of Key Stage 2 and in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. Standards in literacy and numeracy are below average, largely because too few pupils attain the higher levels, but most reach a high enough standard to be able to cope with their work in other subjects.

11 While most pupils make satisfactory progress over both key stages, the most able pupils are not challenged enough and so the school does not get enough pupils to the higher levels in their work or in the national tests. Progress across the school varies from year to

year. Children get a good start in the Foundation Stage but progress slows at Year 1 before picking up again at Year 2. It is satisfactory overall at Year 3 and Year 4 and then accelerates at Year 5 and 6. However, despite the specialist subject teaching at Year 5 and 6, standards are not as high as they should be and the school needs to review whether this specialisation is the best way to try to raise standards throughout the school. The small number of pupils with English an additional language make good progress in their learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12 The attitudes of St Patrick's pupils to their school, which were praised by the previous inspection team, are still very good. The vast majority of pupils are proud of their school and happy to come to it. They enjoy their work and each other's company. They get on well with their teachers and the other adults who help look after them. They invariably greet visitors with a friendly smile and a confident but polite offer of help.

13 Pupils' behaviour during lessons and their attitudes to learning are, with few exceptions, very good. In the overwhelming majority of lessons pupils work hard both on their own and with each other. In, for example, a reception class English session featuring the story of *A Bear Hunt* all the pupils showed real concentration over a long period and eagerly participated in all aspects of the lesson. During a Year 6 history day on the Second World War, pupils worked together to make sure that they gained as much as possible from a wide range of activities and role-plays. They worked together to construct a full-scale model of an air raid shelter. Behaviour during a Year 2 art trip into Walsall, to look at the local architecture, was exemplary.

14 Lunchtimes are orderly and the pupils happily sit down to eat and talk to each other. Playtimes are an exciting mixture of running, jumping, skipping and ball games with ample space for those who wish simply to chat and enjoy some peace and quiet. The overall standard of behaviour at these times is very good.

15 No bullying at all was seen during the course of the inspection. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them and support the school's approach to discipline and bullying. They confirmed that any bullying which does occur is dealt with promptly and fairly. They look after and encourage each other. All the participants, for instance, in an after school game of rounders for older boys and girls managed to be fiercely competitive whilst still cheering each other along.

16 Pupils respond very positively to responsibility. They help to set up equipment for lessons and assemblies and fetch and carry games equipment. Year 6 pupils are so keen to help nursery pupils with their learning that there is a waiting list of volunteers.

17 Attendance levels are below the national averages and are unsatisfactory. Lessons start and finish on time but the overall standard of punctuality is spoilt by the number of late arrivals at the beginning of the school day. No pupils have been excluded during the last school year.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18 Overall teaching is judged to be satisfactory although during the inspection many of the lessons observed were good. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that the good standard of teaching observed during the inspection is not maintained throughout the year. Teaching is inconsistent across the school, ranging from excellent to unsatisfactory. Of the lessons observed 96% were at least satisfactory with two (4%) being excellent and a further 18% being very good. Another 42% were judged to be good. These figures match those from the previous report, so the quality of teaching observed has been maintained. The two excellent

lessons observed during this inspection, one in the Foundation Stage and one at Key Stage 2, were special events. A visiting expert captured, and held, the attention of the nursery children with his knowledge of animals. He had brought several to show the children and constantly reinforced their learning by asking questions and reminding children what they had heard earlier in the lesson. The second excellent lesson was part of a history day with Year 6 pupils dressing in war time costumes and undertaking a wide range of practical activities related to their history topic on the Second World War. Pupils entered into the spirit of the lesson with great enthusiasm and thoroughly enjoyed the day.

19 Teaching is good at the Foundation Stage and satisfactory at Key Stages 1 and 2. In the Foundation Stage the children have a good range of appropriate activities with a balance between play and more teacher-directed tasks. Consequently they make good progress in basic skills and, although they generally enter nursery with lower than average levels of attainment, many leave the Foundation Stage and enter Key Stage 1 with attainment in line with that of most other children. The weakest teaching is at Year 1, where it is unsatisfactory overall and the strongest teaching is in Year 5 and 6, where some specialist subject teaching takes place. There was one unsatisfactory lesson observed in each key stage. Although the teaching at Year 1 is unsatisfactory overall, some lessons, taken by part-time and supply teachers, are good. For example, in a science lesson the pupils learned about the parts of various plants that are eaten by humans. However, a scrutiny of the books shows that too often pupils are all given the same worksheet to complete, whatever their ability, and that much of the work is not marked properly. Consequently, these pupils mark time in their learning rather than making effective progress. This means that, even though some of the teaching at Year 2 is very good, the pupils do not make fast enough progress throughout the key stage to do well in the national tests for seven-year-olds. Overall, teaching at Year 2 ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 2, teaching is satisfactory at Years 3 and 4 and generally better than this at Years 5 and 6 where teachers specialise in teaching particular subjects, including literacy, numeracy, science, religious education, design and technology, and art and design.

20 In the best lessons teachers plan carefully saying precisely what they expect pupils to learn as a result of their teaching. They share this information with them and often check at the end of the lesson how well the pupils have learned what was intended. They mark work thoroughly, telling pupils clearly what is good about their work and how to make it better. However not all marking is of this high standard and too often it is limited to ticks and crosses which do not help pupils to know how to improve.

21 Pupils particularly enjoy practical activities and this was one reason why the history day in Year 6 was so successful. The best lessons involve a strong practical element, so that pupils learn a lot in some of their science work by conducting investigations. In Year 2, for example, they enjoyed constructing circuits to make buzzers and lights work, but then too much time was spent on unnecessarily writing everything up. In another science lesson, Year 6 pupils built on information they had acquired in history lessons and tested the quality of materials for their use as blackout curtains; they also sent each other secret messages, enhancing their knowledge of electricity in the process. In mathematics, the best lessons included open-ended questioning to help pupils explore mathematical ideas in a practical way and extend their knowledge and understanding. In art in Year 2, pupils with special educational needs learned the basic skills required to produce wax etchings and also found out how to create particular types of backgrounds to computer-generated pictures. Again, they enjoyed the practical activities involved. Occasionally teachers lack confidence in a subject and as a result the lesson is unsatisfactory. For example, in a music lesson at Key Stage 2 and a physical education lesson at Key Stage 1 teachers did not give the pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work, or teach musical and physical skills effectively enough for them to be successful. Consequently, pupils made a fuss and

teachers did not manage and control them effectively so that time was wasted and progress was slower than it might have been.

22 The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall and pupils generally make satisfactory progress. However activities are not always planned carefully enough to make sure that all pupils have had enough work and some more able pupils are not extended sufficiently as a result. This means that in the national tests for seven and eleven-year-olds not enough pupils achieve the higher than expected levels. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Pupils make satisfactory progress partly due to the quality of individual education plans which contain targets for improvement. Support staff are used effectively and records of gains in skills, knowledge and understanding are kept. In mathematics, however, fewer targets are set for these pupils and teachers expect too little of them. In English and mathematics, work is not always matched carefully enough to targets set in pupils' plans. Although the school has begun to identify pupils with particular talents, for example in sport and music, it does little currently to identify and support the most able and help them to achieve more. Pupils with English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress.

23 Teaching is satisfactory in English, mathematics, ICT, music and physical education at both key stages. In science, art and design and geography it is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. In history it is good at both key stages. Not enough teaching was seen in design and technology to be able to make judgements.

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

24 At the time of the last inspection the school was judged to provide a broad and balanced curriculum with an appropriate amount of time given to each subject. Apart from music the curriculum met statutory requirements, though some improvements to the policies and schemes of work were suggested. The school has successfully addressed these issues and now provides a good, well-balanced curriculum covering all subjects. It has also implemented the new arrangements for the Foundation Stage and established literacy and numeracy sessions throughout the school.

25 Overall, the curriculum provided is good and meets statutory requirements. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good in the Foundation Stage, with children taking part in a wide range of activities. The curriculum is well structured to ensure full coverage of each area of learning. The quality and effectiveness of planning is good and children are prepared well for entry into Year 1. The provision and opportunities for outdoor play for the reception class pupils are unsatisfactory, however, as they do not have access to the under-fives play area and equipment. The quality and range of curricular opportunities provided for pupils in both key stages is good overall. All policies and schemes of work are in place based on national guidelines and include references to the use of ICT in other subjects. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the school was criticised for not including guidance on the use of ICT in subject policies and schemes of work.

26 There are satisfactory guidelines for responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Occasionally pupils are withdrawn from lessons for extra help, where there is a need to do so, following targets identified in their individual education plans. These targets are reviewed regularly, usually once a term. Most of the support provided is within the classroom.

27 The strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are satisfactory and are securely in place. Homework is set twice a week to reinforce pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 2. While planning takes account of the needs of the pupils with special

educational needs there is less emphasis on meeting the needs of the higher attaining pupils at both key stages.

28 Provision is enhanced through visits and residential trips to support pupils' learning. There is a clear policy and guidelines on educational visits including where each class will go and what subjects will be supported by the visit. These include residential experiences for pupils in Year 4, who visit Tenbury Wells, and for pupils in Year 6 to pursue outdoor challenges at Beaudesert. Provision for after-school clubs and activities is satisfactory, though mainly sports related, and is similar to that found in other schools.

29 The provision for personal, social and health education is good. The school encourages the development of positive attitudes and the growth of self-esteem through its well-planned and well-taught programme. Circle time, the collective act of worship, visiting speakers, storytellers, book fairs, and looking after the gardens with the caretaker all promote pupils' personal development effectively.

30 Sex education is covered as part of the wider health education programme, which includes drugs awareness and is covered through science, physical education, religious education, and personal and social education. The school involves the school nurse, the police and other relevant adults in teaching health education. Sound understanding and awareness of health and safety are developed through a visit to Bescot Stadium. Healthy eating and diet are considered when the cook helps pupils to think about the foods they choose to eat.

31 The school has satisfactory links with the community. There is some liaison with the police, the fire station, the college of continuing education and health agencies. Some children are involved in the annual Walsall music and choir festivals. There is good involvement with the wider community through the use of e-mails and access to the Internet, particularly, in geography, where pupils in Year 6 keep in touch with Nicci as she travels round the world.

32 There are good links with the immediate schools in the area and very close links with the Catholic schools partnership. At times staff train together and there are opportunities for shared experiences. Good links exist with the two comprehensive schools.

Equal opportunities

33 A key issue in the previous inspection focused on the underachievement of boys. Since then, the school has taken steps to address this issue and has been partially successful in doing so, particularly through English and mathematics. Staff have received in-service training on strategies for teaching boys in an effort to make lessons interactive and more suitable to their needs. When purchasing resources for the National Literacy Strategy, for example, there has been a focus on 'boy friendly' material. While these initiatives have resulted in improvements to boys' reading there remains a tendency for girls to outperform boys and improve at a faster rate.

English as an additional language

34 There are currently two children in the nursery with English as an additional language. Their needs are well met, helped greatly by the bilingual nursery nurse. Further support will be required when these children progress to the reception class.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

35 Overall provision is good. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral and social development and satisfactory provision for their spiritual and cultural development with a number of good elements present.

36 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. This is promoted through displays of prayers and Bible texts throughout the school, collective prayers said in class at the beginning and end of the day and before and after meal times, and regular collective acts of worship in school and at the adjacent St Patrick's Church. Teachers create limited opportunities for promoting spiritual development and encouraging pupils to reflect on values and beliefs within normal daily lessons. One good example was in a Year 6 lesson. The teacher said a prayer recalling the Second World War (linked to their history topic) over background pan-pipes music, during which the children were able to reflect on the feelings and thoughts of families and loved ones. They considered memories of loss and anxiety and great joy. On another occasion, the visit of the 'Animal Man' enabled nursery children to handle a range of exotic creatures which was linked to Christian teachings on care for all God's creatures and which provided them with an 'awesome' experience. However, both of these lessons were special events which do not occur on a frequent basis. In assemblies during the inspection, hymns and songs were rarely sung although background music was occasionally played before assembly.

37 There is a very good framework for the promotion of pupils' moral development. All the staff set a good example for the pupils to emulate, by promoting the school's values and standards and treating the pupils with care and respect. Pupils' self-esteem and confidence is enhanced in lessons and elsewhere with constant praise and encouragement. The school fosters the values of honesty, fairness and good behaviour. The school's behaviour policy and code of conduct emphasise responsibility and positive relationships. The code is understood by all pupils, who respond to it well and behave accordingly. From nursery onwards, pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong and to understand what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. Consequently, pupils' conduct in and out of school is very good. Teachers use assemblies well to promote politeness and good manners. For example, in an infant assembly two pupils took part in a role-play which encouraged their use of the words 'please' and 'thank you'. Rewards to promote good behaviour are employed and 'merit' assemblies reinforce this.

38 The school provides good opportunities in lessons to support pupils' social development. This was evident in a Year 4 lesson when pupils considered the impact of tourism on the lives of local people and their environment. In a Year 3 geography lesson pupils were developing a study on the way in which changes in climatic conditions affect people's lives.

39 In other lessons, pupils are expected to have a clear respect for each other's contribution and help each other with their activities. They respond positively to these expectations. For example, in an after-school Years 5 and 6 mixed rounders game, pupils were aware of each others' skills and abilities and encouraged the less agile pupils when they failed to stop or catch the ball. The whole game was conducted in an atmosphere of fun, enjoyment and co-operation.

40 Pupils are expected to take care of the equipment they use in lessons and at play-times and respond well as a result. For example in science, physical education lessons and playtimes when pupils used a wide range of small apparatus, they exhibited much care and respect for school resources and equipment.

41 Pupils' self-esteem is well promoted. Their comments and responses in class are invariably valued and respected and never undermined. Classroom 'star' and 'points' lists are designed to promote pupils' achievements whilst older pupils are given a variety of responsibilities such as ringing the playtime bell or assisting with the supervision of younger children at break-times. The school uses personal social and health education lessons well to encourage good inter-personal relationships. A Year 2 lesson on 'living things', for example, enabled pupils to realise the importance of exhibiting affection, care and consideration towards all human beings as much as to pets and other small creatures. This strongly reinforced the school's ethos and mission statement.

42 The school supports a number of charities locally and nationally. The pupils' generous responses have enabled groups of very sick children to be taken on pilgrimages to Lourdes.

43 Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Although the school arranges visits to places of interest such as museums, art galleries, historical buildings and those related to other faiths and cultures, these tend to be under used. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures through their religious education and geography lessons. Art lessons introduce them to the work of famous artists but there is less emphasis on learning about famous composers in music. However, there is much more the school could be doing to promote cultural awareness of its pupils like regularly playing music by famous composers in assembly and encouraging pupils to write reviews of novels they have enjoyed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44 Standards of care for the pupils appear to have been maintained since the last inspection. All of St Patrick's staff and governors are concerned to ensure that their pupils spend their school days in a safe and secure environment. Health and safety risk assessments are carried out and generally appropriate action is taken at the beginning and, whenever necessary, throughout every school year. Trips out are carefully planned as in the case of a Year 2 visit to Walsall town centre, when great attention was paid to safety matters. However, a number of health and safety issues were raised during the inspection. The governors therefore should undertake a thorough risk assessment of the areas of concern and revise procedures and practices in the light of their findings.

45 Child protection arrangements are good and include links with all the appropriate local authorities. There is normally at least one fully qualified first aider on site during the school day. In addition several other members of staff have basic first aid training.

46 The school has a very successful approach to encouraging and maintaining good standards of behaviour. It is based on a system of rewards and sanctions, which was introduced several years ago. Reminders of this system are on wall posters throughout the school. There is no separate bullying policy but the school has comprehensive arrangements for dealing with any bullying which does occur and these are well understood by all staff and pupils.

47 There are no formal systems for monitoring pupils' personal development but teachers and support staff know their pupils very well. Pupils are praised for their good work, effort, behaviour and personal achievements. They are rewarded through a well-established house point scheme. Individual outstanding achievement during the whole school year is recognised by the awarding of a special shield. Year 6 pupils' achievements and contributions to the life and work of St Patrick's during their years of attendance are celebrated at a special leavers' mass and party.

48 There are good attendance monitoring systems in place but the actual levels of attendance are below the national averages. Punctuality, at the beginning of the school day is also a problem. Punctuality and attendance levels are still a concern of the governors, headteacher and the rest of the staff, although they have no systematic procedures for assessing the impact on pupils' learning. They are working with parents and, where necessary, the local education welfare officer to try and improve the situation.

49 The school now has a comprehensive assessment, recording, reporting and marking policy that outlines clearly the philosophy behind assessment and recording and its place in the planning cycle. Since the last inspection, the school has revised and developed its assessment procedures for English, mathematics and science and these are now good, except for reading records at Key Stage 2. The school has recently introduced good procedures to monitor the progress of individual pupils in English, mathematics and science. Results from the national tests for seven and eleven-year-olds and other assessment information are thoroughly analysed and carefully recorded to give an on-going record of how each pupil is progressing. Test results are monitored by gender so the school is aware that girls' standards are improving faster than those of boys and are trying to address the problem. However these systems are still in their infancy and have not yet had a major impact on raising standards. Assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are largely informal and less structured. Teachers tend to record what has been covered rather than what particular pupils have actually learned. Consequently work is not always well matched to pupils' needs. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and all statutory requirements are met. Needs are identified early and outside agencies used effectively. The level of care and support given by teaching and non-teaching staff is good overall. However, weaknesses in the marking of pupils' work, together with limited targets, particularly in mathematics mean it is not always clear how well pupils have achieved. Gains in academic and personal progress are recorded termly and details shared with parents and guardians.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50 The school works well with parents and has worked hard to improve its links since the last inspection. Parents have every confidence in St Patrick's. They believe that it is a very good school, which is helping their children to learn and mature. They feel that it is a caring community which looks after their children and in both the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting they made no significant criticisms of any aspect of the school and school life. They confirm that their children really like school, that discipline is good and that their children are well behaved.

51 Formal documents such as the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are comprehensive and well produced. Newsletters keep parents up to date and notices on classroom windows keep them in touch with what their children are learning. There are useful 'target booklets', which outline what pupils are expected to learn and achieve.

52 The arrangements for introducing new pupils into the reception class are good. They include briefing sessions for parents and visits to the school for both parents and prospective new pupils.

53 Parents are pleased with the range and amount of both formal and informal information which they receive about their children's progress. In the spring term a brief report provides a valuable and useful mid-year review. At the end of the year there is a comprehensive report which contains an evaluation of pupils' progress across all subjects. Parents are encouraged not only to comment on the reports but also to make their own contribution to them.

54 There are regular consultation evenings, which tend to be less well attended as children advance through the school. The school therefore makes alternative arrangements to see parents who, for whatever reason, cannot attend and hence manages eventually to reach around 85% of them. Parents can contact the headteacher at almost any time. Teachers are usually available at the end of the school day and a simple appointment system ensures that longer one-to-one meetings can be arranged easily.

55 The school instigated a home-school agreement several years ago but so far only 10% of parents have signed up to it. In spite of this parents, as their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting show, are committed to working with the school to help their children learn. They give the school their full support.

56 Up to ten parents and grandparents regularly contribute to the everyday life of the school. They work as volunteers in the library, listen to pupils read and help with trips. Two, who are qualified coaches, work with the school's netball and football clubs. One, who is a computer specialist, provides advice and support. Some parents are employed as classroom assistants.

57 The St Patrick's Family and Friends Association works with and for the school. It arranges fundraising and social activities such as discos, Christmas parties and summer fetes for pupils and families throughout the school year. It regularly contributes to the cost of school visits.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58 Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The head and senior management team are keen to raise standards and have introduced a number of initiatives to try to raise the attainment of boys which was identified as a key issue in the previous inspection report.

59 These include a new system for tracking the progress pupils make in their learning as they move through the school, procedures for monitoring teaching and learning on a regular basis and target setting for individual pupils to encourage higher achievement. However many of these systems are very recent and the school has not yet worked out how to evaluate their impact on raising standards.

60 While the school is committed to raising standards, it has focused too much on simply getting more pupils to the expected levels in the national tests rather than on extending all pupils, including the more able, so that it improves the numbers gaining the higher levels too. It bases its targets for improvement very heavily on predictions based on past performance rather than aiming to help more pupils to speed up their rate of progress and exceed their predictions. For example, pupils who achieve a good level 2 in the tests for seven-year-olds are expected to gain a level 4 at the age of eleven, so that becomes their target, rather than considering what the school might do to help some of those pupils move from a level 2 to a level 5 in that time.

61 Although the school now has some effective systems in place for monitoring and evaluating how well it is doing, the senior management team is sometimes reluctant to take the action necessary to bring about improvement. For example, the school has been aware of where there is weak teaching for a considerable time without effectively resolving the issue. There is also an assumption from some senior staff that they have tried everything to address particular problems, while rejecting suggestions and ideas that they clearly have not tried. Current ways of working are not challenged regularly enough to check if they are the most effective. For example, the school has some subject specialist teaching in Year 5 and Year 6 but has no system in place to check the impact of this on standards being achieved

by pupils and whether the same, or higher standards, could be achieved without specialisation or through an alternative system like setting by ability and using part time staff to create an extra group for particular subjects.

62 The governing body is committed and conscientious. It has established a series of committees with clear terms of reference and delegated powers and meets its statutory duties. Governors understand how well the school is doing in relation to schools nationally and to similar schools. They work hard for the good of the school and have an oversight of particular subjects. However, they are not yet confident enough to fulfil their roles as effectively as they might and rely too heavily on the guidance of the staff. They are, therefore, not all fully aware of the main strengths and areas of development of the school and how to best to move it forward. Consequently, while the school development and improvement plan is generally satisfactory, it is lacking in precision, has too much emphasis on processes and procedures and does not concentrate effectively enough upon how those processes and procedures will help to raise standards.

63 The school has a clear set of aims which include a commitment to high standards of work and behaviour and reflect its status as a church school. Its aims are reflected in most of what it does and it is generally successful in meeting them. It has a clear commitment to providing equal opportunities for all pupils and manages the arrangements for pupils with special educational needs effectively. The co-ordinator for special educational needs maintains the register of pupils satisfactorily. However, for some pupils on Stage 1 of the Code of Practice there is too little consideration on whether they need to remain at that stage, be taken off the register or moved to a higher level during their time in school. The co-ordinator shares her expertise with others and provides opportunities for colleagues to share concerns when needed. Outside agencies are involved as required and the governing body is kept informed appropriately by the headteacher, the co-ordinator for special educational needs and the responsible governor who monitors provision.

64 The school has an adequate number of teaching and non-teaching staff. There are appropriate arrangements for the induction of new staff. It has a satisfactory performance management policy and a structured programme in place to implement it. There is plenty of accommodation, and resources for learning are satisfactory in all subjects except music, where the school was criticised in the last report for not having enough. The school has a good supply of art materials which help the pupils in Years 5 and 6 to achieve such good results.

65 The school budget reflects the priorities set out in the school development and improvement plan and is monitored regularly throughout the year. Specific grants are properly used for the purposes for which they were intended. Day-to-day management and control of the budget is effective. The head and the governors have a sound grasp of the principles of best value and try to apply them in spending decisions to ensure that they get the best deal even though it is not necessarily the cheapest. The school is making satisfactory use of new technology. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66 In order to improve the school further the headteacher, staff and governors should:

Raise overall standards, particularly in English, mathematics, and science by: (paragraphs 2-11, 86, 88-94, 97-100, 106.)

- developing and using more effective ways of identifying the precise steps all individual and groups of pupils need in order to make faster progress; (paragraphs 5-7, 19, 20, 22, 27, 49, 60.)
- matching the work pupils are given, and the ways it is taught, more appropriately to their needs, especially for the more able; (paragraphs 5, 7, 11, 19, 21, 22, 27, 49, 60, 101, 109, 121.)
- being more rigorous in questioning what works well and what could be improved, and taking effective and decisive action to bring about those improvements; (paragraphs 60, 61.)
- developing the confidence, knowledge and understanding of all the governors so that they can more rigorously and confidently hold the school to account for its performance; (paragraph 62)
- providing the staff and governor training required to meet these goals.

Improve the quality of teaching in Year 1. (paragraphs 5, 19, 61, 95, 102, 107, 109.)

Improve attendance and punctuality. (paragraph 17.)

Minor issues

As well as the key issues above the governors, headteacher and staff should undertake an urgent risk assessment on the health and safety issues that the inspection team brought to their attention and modify processes and procedures in the light of that assessment; (paragraph 44.)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	57
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	19	42	32	4		

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)	26	217
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		51

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y R – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	43

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	16	17	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	12
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	26	27	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (83)	82 (79)	79 (86)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	14
	Girls	14	14	17
	Total	26	26	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (79)	79 (86)	94 (90)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	12	12	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	9
	Girls	12	9	10
	Total	20	17	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (76)	71 (72)	79 (79)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	7	9
	Girls	9	9	10
	Total	14	16	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (59)	67 (76)	79 (83)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	177
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y R – Y 6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.8
Average class size	27.1

Education support staff: YR– Y6

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

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	461788
Total expenditure	461298
Expenditure per pupil	1899
Balance brought forward from previous year	10536
Balance carried forward to next year	11026

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	243
Number of questionnaires returned	32

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	22	3	6	0
My child is making good progress in school.	78	18	3	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	59	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	50	10	0	0
The teaching is good.	78	16	6	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	39	6	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	26	10	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	16	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	41	47	9	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	56	28	6	6	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	41	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	50	7	7	13

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

67 Children are admitted to the nursery at the beginning of the term following their third birthday. Most children in the nursery move into the school's reception class in September following their fourth birthday. All children in reception have attended a nursery for at least three terms.

68 There are three children in nursery for whom English is not their mother tongue. The nursery nurse is bilingual and provides good support for them.

69 Children are assessed on entry to nursery. Their development is generally below that expected for their age, especially in language skills and in number awareness. They have limited experience of the world beyond the local environment and lack creative imagination. Many children are socially immature for their age. Children make good progress because they are well taught. Staff provide a good range of appropriate activities and resources. They balance closely working with children and allowing them to choose the activities they prefer. By the end of reception they are close to the expected level for their age. Teachers keep careful records of children's achievements which are updated termly.

70 The nursery and reception classes form a discrete unit within the school. Provision in both classes is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Both rooms are well laid out with a carpeted area for whole class time and space for noisy, wet or quiet group activities. Teachers in both classes create an attractive and stimulating environment for the children. They each have a good range of resources which are well organised and effective in helping children to learn.

71 The nursery has access to a separate outdoor space with hard and grassed areas. Steps around the hard surface are a potential hazard although children are taught how to negotiate them safely. Plans are in hand to minimise the dangers. There is a good selection of wheeled toys, small games equipment and facilities for climbing and sliding. Reception children do not have access to this area. They have a short time each day to use the infant playground to develop small games skills. Consideration should be given to providing these children with better opportunities to experience appropriate outdoor activities.

72 There is no co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage in post at present. Teachers and their assistants meet regularly to discuss lesson planning and children's attainment and progress. They know the children well. Lessons are planned according to the six areas of learning for children under five. All activities are well planned on the clear basis of what children will learn, including the play activities such as sand and water. The nursery assistants make a valuable contribution to children's development. They monitor individual children during whole class sessions. This helps teachers provide for each child's individual needs. Students and volunteer helpers also make a good contribution to children's development. The children would benefit from more specifically planned skills development for the nursery outdoor area.

Personal, social and emotional development

73 Children in each class are encouraged to become independent. Good opportunities are provided in both classes for children to work together in pairs or small groups. Nursery children learn to make choices when deciding which activity they want to engage in. They learn good manners at drinks time. They learn to share and take turns. They behave very well and take care of equipment. Children are encouraged to dress and undress themselves

with minimum adult help but some children wait for adults to help them. The teacher provides good opportunities for children to choose activities, to share resources, and to work and play together. She expects them to help to tidy up at the end of a session, encouraging a sense of responsibility. All children learn the regular routines and expectations of what is right and wrong.

74 Children in the reception class behave well. They learn to maintain attention and concentrate during whole class sessions. They understand different feelings such as sad, happy, shy and scared and express these in movement. Children co-operate well in small group activities delighting in their own discoveries, such as those who found that marbles which normally sink can be made to float by placing them inside a plastic container.

Communication, language and literacy

75 Many children enter nursery with limited speaking skills. They are often shy and reluctant to communicate. Many opportunities are provided for them to gain confidence in small groups, talking about their experiences and about the activities they are engaged in. In reception, they continue to have many opportunities to develop their speaking skills. Children in both classes learn to listen to one another.

76 The teachers introduce the children to a good selection of attractive picture and story books. They offer clear explanations about what children are going to do and learn and check the progress they are making through good use of well directed questions. Consequently children listen well to stories and learn singing and action rhymes. They are encouraged to recognise their own name. More able children begin to recognise other children's names as well. They recognise some letter shapes and sounds. By the time they move into reception, the most able children begin to tell the story in books by 'reading' the pictures. They use story telling intonation and describe the pictures in great detail. All children enjoy looking at books. They handle them with care turning the pages correctly. By the end of reception, the more able children are reading the early books in the scheme accurately and fluently using their phonic knowledge to work out unfamiliar words. The least able children are only just beginning to recognise that print carries meaning.

77 In the nursery, children learn to hold writing tools correctly and begin to make marks on paper. The most able children attempt to write their own name. By the end of reception the more able children write short sentences independently finding unfamiliar words in a word list. Letter formation is reasonably well controlled. Most children copy words correctly. The least able children still need to trace over adult writing. In lessons expectation is appropriately matched to individual children's stage of development. The less able children have extra help in a small group which helps them to make good progress.

Mathematical development

78 In nursery, children learn to count to five through singing rhymes and games. There are many incidental occasions to practise counting. Most children learn to count to five accurately. More able children count beyond ten. They recognise numbers to ten and put them in the correct order. Children learn the names of some two-dimensional shapes and use them to make patterns and pictures. They learn early language of comparison such as 'longer' and 'shorter', 'heavier' and 'lighter'.

79 In reception, children build on what they have previously learned. By the end of the year most children recognise numbers to ten, count out ten objects accurately and order the numbers correctly. About half the children understand and calculate one more than a given number. The most able begin to understand one less than a given number in a practical way. Less able children become more confident in recognising numbers and quantities to five and

order these numbers correctly. Pupils continue to explore two and three-dimensional shapes. They order object by length and size. More able children reach the expected level for their age, other children are just below the expected level. Teaching is planned carefully to fully reflect the requirements of the Foundation Stage. Teachers intervene in the activities effectively to take children's learning forward at a good pace.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

80 Children coming into nursery have limited experiences of the wider world. The rich variety of experiences provided helps them extend their horizons. A particularly good example seen during the inspection was the visit by 'The Animal Man' who brought several exotic animals for the children to learn about and touch. This was an excellent learning experience which was enhanced by allowing individual children to take photographs with a school camera. Teachers give children good opportunities to learn to control a mouse when using the computer to reinforce learning about sounds and numbers. They provide a good range of appropriate activities. Consequently children learn the difference between wet and dry sand and what happens if they are mixed. Teachers give them good opportunities to build, using different construction kits. The term's topic on animals is supported by attractive books, creative activities and by turning a small area into an animal hospital.

81 In reception, children extend their understanding about the wider world through a more detailed study of animals. They use books to find out information and produce pictures to record their learning. Children explore early science understanding by learning what floats or sinks and how to make heavy things float by placing them in a container or on top of something which does float such as a cork. They develop good investigative skills.

Physical development

82 Nursery children have good opportunities to learn to move with confidence and control. In the hall they show an awareness of space, themselves and others as they move in different ways, forwards and sideways, slowly, quickly, jumping and running. They become aware of the changes in their bodies when they are active. Outside, teachers encourage them to pedal, not push, tricycles and steer them safely. They throw balls, aiming them with some accuracy. Children learn to handle objects, writing tools and malleable materials with increasing control. They explore playdough and enjoy making snakes from plasticine.

83 Teachers encourage reception children to move in different ways expressing emotions imaginatively such as responding to a recorded lesson using the song 'We're all going on a bear hunt'. Their movements match the events of the song showing delight, fear, surprise and wariness in response to changing moods in the music. This was a very good opportunity to follow instructions and move with control. Most children control writing implements reasonably well for their age. Scissor control improves appropriately. They learn to throw and catch balls with greater accuracy.

Creative development

84 Many children lack creative skills when they start nursery. Teachers make sure they have good opportunities to use paint to explore colour. They make pictures and patterns with different shapes and materials. They draw and paint pictures of themselves, but these are often immature. They have good opportunities to learn songs and explore different sounds. Listening to different stories helps them develop their own imagination. They act out different characters in the role-play area.

85 Reception children continue to explore the use of different media for picture and pattern making. Their pictures of people become more detailed with a few children creating very good drawings. Children learn to move imaginatively to music. They learn to sing more songs. The role-play area encourages them to use their imagination representing different characters.

ENGLISH

86 Pupils' performance at the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in 2000 was close to the national average. It was above average when compared with the results achieved by pupils from similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining the higher level was below the national average. Trends show that standards have been average for three of the last four years and above average in the fourth.

87 Girls tend to outperform boys and improve at a faster rate. This was an issue at the previous inspection. A high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs in the school are boys. The school has taken some steps to address the situation and has been partially successful in doing so. For example, books have been purchased with boys' interests in mind for the National Literacy Strategy. These have helped to improve the standard of boys' reading.

88 In the end of Key Stage 1 tests in 2000, pupils' performance in reading was well below the national average. In writing, it was below the national average. When compared with similar schools, pupils' results in reading were below average but were close to the average for similar schools in writing. Very few pupils achieved the higher level in reading. There were no pupils who achieved the higher level in writing, and few achieved Level 2A. In the last four years, standards in reading have been consistently below or well below average. In writing, they have been below or well below in three of the last four years. Girls outperformed boys in English. Overall, standards have remained the same as at the previous inspection in reading with a marginal improvement in writing, which is the weaker element at both key stages. This is a concern, as standards of writing were reported to be good at both key stages in the previous report.

89 The evidence from the inspection of pupils' school work shows that the standards achieved by the current Year 6 and Year 2 are below average. A major reason for this is the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This is particularly evident in Year 1 where standards of work in books was found to be unsatisfactory because there was a lack of attention to matching work appropriately to the different needs and abilities of children. An over-dependence on worksheets stifles pupils' progress, particularly in writing. In addition, a lack of attention to marking pupils' work prevents them from progressing as well as they should. More able pupils, in particular, are underachieving. Given that attainment on entry is below average, in spite of better teaching elsewhere in the school, teachers have to make up for the unsatisfactory experience in Year 1, throughout the rest of the school. This is having a major impact on standards being achieved at the end of Key Stage 1 in particular.

90 Further reasons for standards being below average are the lack of challenge for more able pupils through sufficiently demanding work in some classes, and the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, particularly in Year 2, where pupils are organised into two classes according to ability in an effort to raise standards. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress, including pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Progress is inconsistent between year groups and key stages. It is generally better at the Foundation Stage and the end of Key Stage 2 where teaching is better than elsewhere in the school. In most other classes, pupils make satisfactory gains in learning. Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils, particularly of the more able, and teaching, whilst satisfactory in most cases, is rarely sufficiently

demanding to challenge these pupils. Marking is inconsistent and does not always indicate to pupils what needs to be done to improve their work. Marking for pupils in Year 5 and 6 is good, and contributes to the accelerated learning for the older pupils. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully implemented in most classes, and is helping to raise standards, albeit slowly.

91 Standards in speaking and listening are below average at the end of both key stages but pupils make sound progress, given their attainment on entry to school. Most pupils listen attentively to their teacher and each other but sometimes pupils remain passive when questioned and some are reluctant to answer questions or engage in more extended discussion. Not all teachers provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to express opinions and engage in discussions. However, in the Year 2 classes, teachers focus well on speaking and listening. In a shared poetry reading session for example, more able pupils made good gains in developing expression and performing aloud to an audience because the teacher had high expectations and encouraged them to improve and refine their work. However, a significant proportion of pupils do not have a wide vocabulary and find difficulty expressing answers at length. In Key Stage 2, although pupils' vocabulary has improved, many pupils respond with short, one-word answers, are reluctant to expand on their ideas and do not have an extensive vocabulary. When teaching is good, follow-up questions are asked to encourage pupils to extend their discussion and gain confidence in speaking aloud. There are few opportunities through drama or role-play to promote speaking and listening skills further.

92 Reading is below average at the ages of seven and eleven. The highest attaining pupil in Year 2 is a very able reader, who is very fluent and expressive, reading well above the expected level. Other more able pupils understand terms such as 'author' and 'illustrator' and read with increasing fluency. Many pupils are hesitant readers, however, with limited strategies to help them make sense of unknown words. In Key Stage 2 a significant number of pupils lack fluency when reading. Less able pupils do not always make use of punctuation to help them make sense of their reading. A few lack interest and enthusiasm for books. More able pupils read fluently and with good expression. They say which books they like and discuss their favourite authors, who include Charles Dickens, R.L.Stein and Roald Dahl. The proportion of pupils reading at the higher levels is below average. Reading records lack sufficient diagnostic comments to identify where pupils need to improve, and the inconsistent use of reading records is impeding pupils' progress. This is particularly so for the older pupils in Key Stage 2 who do not maintain reading records or complete book reviews regularly.

93 Writing skills are below average at the ages of seven and eleven. Although some pupils present work neatly with a good cursive style, a significant proportion of pupils lack pride in the presentation of their work, and handwriting is untidy. Although pupils practise cursive writing in handwriting lessons, skills are not always transferred to other occasions for writing. Older pupils are not expected to write in ink consistently. As a result, pupils are often seen writing in pencil or ballpoint pen, which does not help them to develop fluency when using pens. Within Key Stage 1, pupils do not write for a wide enough range of purposes. The over-dependence on worksheets in Year 1 limits opportunities for more extended writing. This improves in Year 2 where pupils begin to write for an increasing range of purposes which includes letters, stories, instructions and descriptions. More able pupils demonstrate a lively style and good use of description. They make simple non-fiction books and write riddles and nonsense rhymes. They know how to use dictionaries to locate word meanings. A high proportion of Year 2 are on the special educational needs register however. They are not yet secure about simple punctuation and handwriting is not yet joined properly. Spelling is a weakness for many average and below average pupils because they do not have sufficient strategies in place such as spelling strings and patterns to help them.

94 Only one pupil writes at the higher level in Year 6. This work is presented neatly in a good cursive style. Words are chosen adventurously and story openers are interesting. For

example, 'It was cold and foggy and a chill went up my spine...' is the way one story begins. The writing style varies when planning a brochure for a theme park with phrases such as 'Try our most daring roller coaster yet!....enjoy the thrills!....try the bone-tingling, spine chilling Grand National!'. The good use of persuasive language highlights the pupil's good sense of audience when writing. There are good opportunities for older pupils to write at length and across other areas of the curriculum. Pupils write for a very good range of purposes by the time they reach Year 6 and most pupils cover a good amount of work, being well motivated by good teaching and purposeful tasks. The weakness here is that too often the same work is set for all pupils, regardless of ability. Spelling remains a weakness for too many pupils. Some teachers rely too heavily on worksheets at the expense of more extended forms of writing. The number of pupils expected to attain the higher level in writing is below average.

95 Teaching is satisfactory overall and leads to satisfactory gains in learning. During the inspection much good, and some very good, teaching was observed. From the scrutiny of pupils' work, however, it is evident that teaching in Year 1 is unsatisfactory. Most teachers are secure when teaching the basic skills. In a very good lesson seen in Year 2, the teacher demonstrated very good subject knowledge. She explained to pupils at the lesson outset what they were expected to learn so that all were clear about what she expected. Very good use of time targets ensured that the pupils worked quickly and the lesson moved on briskly. Very good planning ensured that tasks were varied for different levels of ability. Pupils worked hard in the lesson, well motivated by the very good pace and the prospect of 'harder work'. They made very good gains in learning, attaining above average standards in this lesson as a result of very good teaching. Sometimes teachers lack sufficient awareness of the gender issues affecting boys' performance. In Year 3 for example, where a third of the class have special educational needs, the organisation of pupils enables the boys to sit passively together at the back while the girls cluster in the centre, taking a full part in the lesson. Teaching does not make effective use of classroom support in these lessons. Very good teaching in Year 6 provides time for pupils to meet together and discuss their work with the teacher, so that they know how to make it better. She has high expectations of what pupils can achieve and challenges them well. Recent strategies such as additional literacy support in Years 3 and 4, as well as ability-grouped classes in Year 2 are beginning to raise standards, particularly for the lower-attaining Year 2 pupils. All pupils are fully included in lessons, but work is not sufficiently demanding for all pupils, particularly the more able, who sometimes do not achieve as much as they could. Management of pupils is good in most classes. Basic skill teaching has improved with the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They are well supported through the targets set in their individual education plans and through the support of classroom assistants within the lessons. As a result, they make steady progress towards their targets. There are many strengths in the teaching of English, but several important aspects need to be addressed including:

- The quality of teaching in Year 1;
- Provision for more able pupils which is not always demanding enough;
- Over-reliance on worksheets at the expense of more extended and creative writing tasks in some classes;
- The marking of pupils' work, which is inconsistent across the school, and in Year 1 is unsatisfactory because work is often left unmarked. In the best practice target setting is reflected in the marking and indicates to pupils how they can improve.

96 The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator who has a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of English, within the school. She monitors teachers' planning and undertakes lesson observations at times. This has ensured that the National Literacy Strategy has been successfully implemented. Whilst it provides positive feedback to

teachers it does not focus sharply enough on how teaching and learning can be improved and standards raised. There are good assessment strategies in place and analysis of the information from these is used to identify what needs to be improved. For example the school has identified writing and the performance of boys as areas to improve. Setting targets for pupils is a recent development and is not yet used consistently across the school. Although resources have been improved to take account of the National Literacy Strategy, library provision in the school is unsatisfactory. The present junior library currently serves as a classroom for some Year 2 pupils, making it unsuitable as an area for independent study and research. Book resources in both libraries are very limited for most areas of the curriculum following a recent audit with the help of the Schools Library Support Service. As a consequence library skills are not developed systematically throughout the school.

MATHEMATICS

97 Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain standards that are below average. These reflect the 2000 national test results, which also indicate that, whilst results were in line with those of similar schools at Key Stage 2, they were well below average at Key Stage 1. Trends show a gradual improvement in standards for 1997 to 1999 followed by a significant decline in standards in 2000. Few pupils attain the higher than expected levels in the national tests. Observations during the inspection indicate that the current Year 6 will not meet their predicted targets in the national mathematics test this year. Teachers generally expect too little of pupils and do not challenge them sufficiently to achieve better standards, particularly the most able.

98 There are marked differences between the performance of boys and girls when compared to the national average. Since 1996, girls' performance at Key Stage 1 has been consistently better than boys'. Whilst there has been some variation at Key Stage 2, the 2000 test results paint a similar picture. This was a key issue during the last inspection and, whilst strategies have been adopted to improve standards overall, the underachievement of boys in comparison with girls has not been resolved. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall with good elements observed but they lack sufficient continuous support to help them to attain the standards expected for their ages.

99 By the age of seven, most pupils begin to understand the value of each digit in two-digit numbers. They count to 100 and are beginning to understand number patterns and sequences in multiples of 2, 3, 5 and 10. Some recognise odd and even numbers and the rule associated with that. A few double and halve numbers without fractions. A successful lesson in Year 2 involved pupils playing a variety of interesting number games in order to consolidate this concept effectively. High expectations together with good use of resources enabled all ability groups to progress well. The more able can add up to three combinations of one and two-digit numbers. Whilst a number of children understand that subtraction is the inverse of addition and that addition can be carried out in any order, many still require counters to help them to work out simple sums involving single-digit numbers. Pupils use correct mathematical names for common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional solids but few know their features and properties. Some are able to read an analogue clock to 'half past' the hour. Most pupils are familiar with the symbols for 'more than' and 'less than' and the more able can complete mathematical sentences by putting in missing values or the correct symbol for addition and subtraction and solve simple problems using these operations. Pupils' grasp of mathematical vocabulary and their ability to work out problems in their head are developing but they need a lot of support. Pupils sort shapes into sets, understand simple line symmetry and make graphs of the results of simple surveys. However there is insufficient emphasis in this area of mathematics in order to consolidate or extend their knowledge and understanding effectively. Too many pupils do not make enough progress in Year 1 so that they need much more practice and reinforcement in all areas of mathematics to cope with the work in Year 2.

100 By the age of 11, many pupils are able to add and subtract a series of numbers mentally, although many lack confidence and still use fingers to assist their thinking. The proportion of pupils who are able to add, subtract, multiply and divide with confidence and accuracy is increasing but is still below the national average. Below average pupils in Year 3 use a variety of practical exercises to learn division. Despite interesting and appropriate group work, progress is slow. A very good lesson in Year 5 involved the pupils investigating palindromes as an interesting way of practising the addition of large numbers. Pupils reduce fractions to their lowest terms and add and subtract simple mixed fractions but they are much less confident on the links between fractions, decimals and percentages. They work out long multiplication and division and solve mathematical problems with increasing confidence. Pupils are encouraged to calculate in a variety of ways and to explain their methods. Written work indicates evidence of more formal recording systems and improved presentation and setting out of solutions. A good lesson in Year 6 on mental arithmetic strategies helped pupils to practise solving problems in their heads. They know about square and prime numbers, and terms like 'multiple' and 'factor'. Pupils identify different sorts of angles and measure and draw them. They learn about the properties of three-dimensional solids but the learning is not always related to everyday situations. For example a Year 6 display which illustrated the sets of solids and partly completed models, could have been extended to an investigation of boxes of varying shape and design. Whilst ICT is used to support mathematics, its application is not taken far enough. For example, pupils in Year 6 gathered data on science experiments and recorded the results on spreadsheets but did not develop this work to produce graphs of their findings.

101 There is not enough work in several aspects of mathematics including symmetry, coordinates, calculating angles, measurement and data handling. Although there is some evidence of problem solving, mathematical investigations through practical work are not a strong feature of mathematics teaching in the school. Pupils at all stages are not secure in checking results and making sensible estimations, as this is under-emphasised, as is applying mathematical knowledge to real-life problem solving. Too often insufficient work is set to consolidate or extend learning effectively, particularly for the more able pupils.

102 Teaching throughout the school is satisfactory overall and most pupils make satisfactory progress. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is mainly satisfactory and occasionally good. In Years 3 to 6 the teaching varies from satisfactory to very good. Teachers are generally secure in their mathematical knowledge and the National Numeracy Strategy, which they apply appropriately. The best teaching is in Years 5 and 6 where the same teacher takes both classes for mathematics. The analysis of pupils' work in Year 1, however, reveals that the pace of work there is slower than in other year groups and pupils make limited progress. Too little is expected of these pupils, with very little work being covered during the year and little evidence of the work being matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, the progress of the more able pupils and those with special educational needs is severely curtailed. In the better lessons throughout the school, teachers tell pupils what they are expected to learn and use the discussion periods at the end of lessons to check and consolidate pupils' understanding or extend it. Oral and mental sessions are usually delivered with slickness, pace and enthusiasm. A series of practical activities in Year 3 enabled pupils with special educational needs to understand the concept of division via multiples of 10p coins in boxes. This was then extended to consider remainders.

103 The best lessons make effective use of questioning to extend pupils' understanding but in some others they are not encouraged to explain how they worked out answers. Teachers have a good rapport with their pupils which leads to good control and management of classes. Too often though the work set does not match the ability of the pupils well enough and teachers rely too heavily on worksheets or exercises which are not hard enough for some pupils. This slows the progress made by some pupils, particularly the more able.

Marking is inconsistent and rarely tells pupils how to improve their work. Not enough use is made of assessment to help to plan work for all ability levels and speed up pupils' progress. Although homework is set there is little evidence that it is helping to raise standards.

104 In all areas of the school, the pupils' ability to use ICT to develop their mathematical knowledge is improving but is still underused. This is mainly because teachers do not provide enough opportunities. The use of numeracy to assist learning in other subjects, for example handling scientific data and making predictions or drawing conclusions from them, needs developing further.

105 The co-ordinator, who is a leading mathematics teacher, is aware of the need to establish more effective strategies to raise standards. She has a good understanding of what is required to manage the subject so that better teaching and learning take place. Teaching and learning have been monitored and weaknesses identified. However the strategies the school has tried so far to raise standards have not produced better results and the school needs to continue to explore ways of organising and teaching mathematics in order to do so.

SCIENCE

106 Standards at the end of both key stages are below average. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that, while most pupils achieve the expected Level 2, no pupils achieve the higher Level 3. At the end of Key Stage 2, test results are below the national average, but in line with similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 is close to the national average. Results for 2001 are expected to be similar. All pupils achieve well in practical aspects of science.

107 Teaching is variable. It is unsatisfactory in Year 1, generally good in Year 2. It is usually good in Key Stage 2, with the best teaching in Years 5 and 6 where classes are taught by the co-ordinator who is a specialist teacher and most pupils learn well. There is a strong emphasis on practical investigative work which promotes good understanding. Some work is too difficult for less able pupils.

108 Most teachers plan lessons carefully. They use a range of strategies including whole class teaching and group activities. Most lessons include practical investigations. Information technology is used to research information, record data and monitor effects, such as using the light sensor in Year 6 investigations. There is a good emphasis on learning correct scientific vocabulary. Teachers assess informally during lessons. At the end of each topic pupils are assessed more formally against the specific learning objectives for that topic. Older pupils have individual targets pasted into their books, and these are monitored. Marking is detailed and constructive for the older pupils but less so for the younger ones.

109 Work in pupils' books shows that in Year 1 there is a very heavy emphasis on completing worksheets or copying statements from the board. There is little difference in the level of difficulty, some of which is challenging for more able pupils and too difficult for less able pupils. The one lesson seen was taught by a supply teacher. It was a very good lesson, using a range of teaching strategies to maintain pupils' interest. Pupils were asked to sort a selection of plants according to whether they thought they were suitable food for humans. The teacher made very good use of reference material, a selection of fruit and vegetables and explanation so that pupils learned that humans can eat fruit and vegetables from the leaves, root, stem, pod or fruit of different plants.

110 Work in both Year 2 classes is appropriate for the abilities of the pupils. Most pupils record their investigations independently; less able pupils have guidelines and grids at different levels to help them become more independent. Teaching for less able pupils is good. The teacher ensures that pupils understand what they have learned previously. She

provides good opportunities for pupils to explore a circuit in a torch and suggest why one torch does not light – because the battery is the wrong way round. Pupils experiment with different ways to complete a circuit to make a bulb light up. This is reinforced well using a simple computer programme. In another lesson for more able pupils, teaching was also appropriate. Pupils were challenged to make a device to scare seagulls from a lighthouse. They used their imagination well to plan a variety of devices using buzzers or bulbs, many activated by a pressure switch. Higher attaining pupils created a device using both buzzer and bulb thus extending their own learning to include a parallel circuit. This otherwise good lesson included too much time spent on unnecessarily detailed writing.

111 Year 3 pupils enjoyed comparing a selection of plant stems for similarities and differences. They used hand lenses sensibly to observe fine detail and record their findings on a simple grid. Pupils used their observations to make good suggestions for the function of plant stems. They offered reasonable predictions for the outcome when white flowers were placed in red water.

112 Year 6 pupils used their knowledge to meet challenges related to a topic on the Second World War. A group used a computer controlled light sensor to test the best material for blackout curtains. They learned that in some tests the lowest reading is the best. Another group tested different materials and designs to make a parachute and realised that the slowest fall was the best. A third group used electricity to communicate a secret message. This was a good lesson applying previous learning in a problem-solving context.

113 Pupils' learning is well planned. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Revisiting topics regularly ensures that learning is reinforced and built upon progressively. More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to extend their knowledge or develop higher enquiry skills. This includes more opportunities for data logging, understanding the need to repeat observations and measurements and a wider use of charts and graphs to communicate data in a systematic manner. They have too few opportunities to identify simple patterns in results, as in Year 5 when the pupils measured how much a spring stretches when weights are added. They are not challenged enough to explain their observations and conclusions and describe their significance and limitations. Less able pupils do not have work which matches their ability level closely enough so that they do not make fast enough progress in their learning.

114 The co-ordinator is effective in planning the curriculum and maintaining suitable resources. Pupils should be trained to take better care of equipment, however: for example, many of the magnets did not have the sleepers in place. The procedure for assessment is satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and learning is less effective, and it is more than a year since an analysis of pupils' work was last done.

115 Overall there has been some improvement since the last inspection as ICT is now written into the planning. Standards have not risen enough, however, especially for the more able pupils. Teaching is still inconsistent across the school and not enough has been done to improve the weakest teaching.

ART AND DESIGN

116 Standards in art and design are in line with those expected of pupils by the end of Key Stage 1, and are above average for the age-group at the end of Key Stage 2 on the basis of the range of work seen. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have learned to use a range of materials and techniques including paints, pencils and collage. They have made patterns through paper weaving, painted portraits, considered warm and cool colours and made flowers by cutting or tearing paper in the shapes of petals. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have produced good

quality paintings in the styles of various artists they have studied including Van Gogh and O'Keeffe. They produce yarn pictures which are carefully made. Year 6 sketch books show drawings in the style of famous artists and sketches of figures to try to illustrate movements. There is little evidence of work in clay or in sewing at either key stage.

117 Overall learning is satisfactory and accelerates at Years 5 and 6. The range of work in Year 1 is fairly limited and apart from some portraits shows little use of paint or printing. At Year 2 learning is better and there is a good emphasis on learning to observe carefully as in the lesson looking at significant buildings around the town centre. Pupils noticed the patterns and designs of the buildings they were taken to see. Pupils with special educational needs in Year 2 learned how to create wax etchings and compared these with pictures they produced on the computer where they merged colours effectively to create backgrounds. There was little art work on display in Year 3. In Year 4 pupils learn to mix shades of a single colour to improve their handling of paint. They design chair covers and paint their designs full size although some of the designs are over-complicated and hard to produce. Year 5 learn to use a range of materials and techniques with a strong emphasis on observational drawing and painting and learn about famous artists. They produce still life pictures using geometric shapes in the style of Picasso for example. Year 6 learn to paint confidently, producing landscapes and seascapes in the style of Van Gogh. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

118 Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. It is good at the top of Key Stage 2 where the art co-ordinator teaches both classes. Her knowledge and understanding of the subject enable her to teach confidently across a range of materials and techniques. However, not all teachers are as confident and competent so that pupils are not given access to the most appropriate tools at times. For example, Year 4 pupils were expected to paint large areas of their seat covers with small brushes when the job would have been accomplished in a few strokes of a large one. The need to paint the background and build upon it was not strongly enough emphasised so that pupils drew very complicated designs and then tried to paint around them. Even in the best lessons opportunities were missed to develop skills. For example in Year 5 pupils glued fabric to fabric rather than learning simple sewing techniques. The reasons given were that it creates a better result, sewing would not look as neat and they can learn to sew at secondary school where there are better facilities. In a good lesson at Year 2, art was taught alongside ICT and the task was well matched to the capabilities of the pupils. They were given clear instructions and guidance and, as a consequence, produced wax etchings of good quality. The teacher emphasised basic skills well so that pupils learned the need to colour evenly and thickly with their crayons and were then encouraged to discuss their computer-generated work and compare it with their etchings. This effectively helped to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills.

119 Leadership is satisfactory. Although the co-ordinator has a good level of expertise and experience in art this tends to be used for specialist teaching at the top of the school and is less effective in bringing the teaching of art in the rest of the school up to this standard. Monitoring and support are informal and do not include regular checking. There are no formal structures for assessing pupils' work or for the co-ordinator to take work in and check standards throughout the school on a systematic basis which would highlight particular strengths and weaknesses and help to determine priorities for development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

120 It was not possible to observe design and technology lessons during the inspection, but Year 6 pupils were observed making models during the history day which focused on life during the Second World War. Judgements are based on a scrutiny of pupils' technology books and finished articles on display around the school.

121 Overall standards in each key stage are in line with expectations. Standards are better in designing and evaluating than in making. There is good progress through the school in analysing manufactured articles, designing artefacts for a specific purpose and evaluating the finished product. There is an overemphasis on this aspect so that pupils do not have enough time to practise and develop the skills and techniques needed to measure carefully, join successfully and finish neatly the articles they are making. Although the Year 6 pupils handle tools sensibly and safely they do not always measure wood, card and paper carefully enough. They do not always remember to use the bench hooks when sawing wood. In many cases joins are made using masking tape or a glue gun. Only the most able devise tabs or hinges to make neat joins.

122 Year 2 pupils design and make a decorative coat for a toy figure. They make good use of a computer program for the final design. Pupils make a paper pattern, try out different ways of joining fabric and practise simple running stitches. The finished garments are neatly stitched and attractively decorated. Year 6 pupils analyse commercial slippers before designing slippers for a particular person. They evaluate the finished product for fitness for purpose. They do both at an appropriate level. The making and joining skills are little better than those of Year 2 pupils. Standards are better when the work involves graphics, such as designs for lunch bags, decorative boxes and posters.

123 The school has rightly concentrated on raising standards in literacy and numeracy which has meant that less time has been available for practical subjects. Consideration should be given to spending more of the time available on developing skills and techniques for making rather than concentrating mainly on the design processes.

124 There is no co-ordinator in post at present; the subject is being managed temporarily. There is a satisfactory curriculum in place covering an appropriate range of materials and topics, including food technology. Sound use is made of commercial construction kits for exploring different mechanisms such as pneumatics to make a monster with a moving jaw, cams to create a toy with moving parts and electric motors to make fairground models work. There is no systematic procedure for assessing pupils' attainment or progress.

125 Provision and standards are not as good as those reported at the previous inspection as the school has had other priorities based on introducing national initiatives.

GEOGRAPHY

126 The last time the school was inspected attainment was said to be in line with national expectations at both key stages. Currently pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 attain the expected levels for their age while by the end of Key Stage 2 attainment is above expectations. This indicates some improvement in standards at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection. This is because since then the school has developed a new policy, adopted the recent national guidance and planning, analysed pupils' work, introduced more fieldwork activities to interest the boys and monitored and evaluated teaching.

127 During the inspection it was not possible to see any lessons in Years 1 and 2. Judgements are based on looking at pupils' work, displays, teachers' medium-term planning

and talking with pupils. Progress in these years is judged to be satisfactory. Teaching seen in Key Stage 2 was good.

128 By the time the pupils are seven years of age they have some understanding of places other than in the local area. They know they live in Walsall in England and they are aware of some of the local features through the walks they take around school and the visit they make to the arboretum. After reading about Katie Morag and her two grandmothers they compare life in their area to that in the fictional Struay. The study of the rainforest helps pupils to understand the different types of plants and animals that exist there.

129 Year 3 pupils begin to recognise local landmarks and have a clearer view of life in and around their local area and build up skills of studying and drawing routes and plans. Their work on weather around the world has given them a better understanding of the rainforest in South America, the desert in the Sahara, the monsoon in India and the coldness in the Polar Regions. This work has developed their mapping skills. Pupils are confident using atlases.

130 Work in Year 4 is good. Pupils build on what they know about the local area and compare this with Llangollen. The work they begin on rivers is continued in Year 5. Pupils use good maps showing the source of the river Severn. Their work shows an understanding of how a river begins to flow and how a waterfall is formed. Pupils learn and use the correct vocabulary, for instance, 'drainage basin', 'V shaped valley', 'interlocking spur', 'tributary', 'plunge pool', 'gorge', 'meanders', and 'bends'. They study Shrewsbury and find out about living by a river as well as travelling on one. They know the difference between man-made river features and natural ones. The pupils' work about the local environment shows how well they have understood the skills already taught.

131 Year 6 pupils have studied Kenya. Photographs helped them to understand what Kenya is really like. Pupils have made comparisons between the area, population, currency, time, languages, poverty and wealth in Kenya and the United Kingdom to give them a good understanding of similarities and differences between the two countries. Areas and places around the world have been reinforced through Year 6 pupils sending and receiving e-mails to and from their correspondent as they plotted her journey through India, Malaysia, and Thailand to Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and on to USA and Canada. Fieldwork and residential opportunities to Tenbury Wells and Beaudesert provide opportunities to enhance the learning in geography through practical work in different areas and the pupils thoroughly enjoyed these experiences.

132 Leadership is very good as the geography co-ordinator knows what is happening in all classes in the school and has an action plan to improve the standards in Year 1 and to improve further the good standards in Key Stage 2. However, there are no formal procedures for systematically assessing and recording the progress pupils make and marking of work is inconsistent.

HISTORY

133 Standards are above average for the pupils aged eleven, which reflects the judgement made in the previous inspection. By the time the pupils are seven most will be reaching levels expected for their age, while the previous report said that standards were high, so this suggests a drop in standards since then. This is mainly due to the lack of knowledge and understanding attained, and the unsatisfactory achievement in Year 1. Teaching seen during this inspection was good overall. In one lesson it was judged to be excellent. The teacher devoted a day to the history topic, devising a wide range of meaningful and interesting practical activities which held the pupils' interest throughout the

entire session. However the analysis of pupils' work shows that teaching is inconsistent across the school.

134 By the age of seven, the pupils have an understanding of how some things have changed in their own life since they were born. Through the study of people and events the pupils know about Doctor Barnardo, Pope Paul II, Sister Dora, Mother Teresa, Florence Nightingale, Queen Elizabeth I and II, Guy Fawkes, and The Great Fire of London. Pupils in the special educational needs group in Year 2 have a clear understanding of the features of a castle and some knowledge of what it might have been like to live in one.

135 Year 3 pupils studied the Romans in the spring term. As well as learning facts about the Roman way of life, pupils used evidence to interpret 'a Roman wall painting', to see what it revealed about Roman fashion, hairstyles and housing, and researched information into 'a soldiers life', as well as working out the reasons for the Romans leaving Britain.

136 Pupils in Year 4 show great enthusiasm in their work on the Ancient Egyptians. Their interest was sparked through the introduction to this work by the library support service and the good displays of pictures, books and artefacts they left in the classroom. Pupils write good quality paragraphs explaining why the river Nile was so important to life there. Their investigative and enquiry skills are developed through research. This study builds on the study of the Tudors, from which pupils know about Henry V¹¹¹ and his wives. The pupils spent three weeks designing and building model ships similar to those used in the battle between England and the Armada.

137 Year 5 pupils have used a variety of sources to gain a clearer understanding of the way of life of the Victorians. Records of local events such as 'The Great Birchills Ironworks Explosion' and 'The case of Dicky Dutton'. in 1856 help pupils appreciate life in the past in their local area. They enjoy using clues and the Pelsall Census of 1881 to find out if people of the same surname are related.

138 Year 6 pupils completed some good work, showing a clear understanding of the Ancient Greeks, earlier in the year. There was evidence of good research work on Alexander, the Olympics, the growth of the City States as well as Greek language and the gods. This term pupils are studying, 'Britain since 1930'. They have studied the lives of employed and unemployed people in the thirties and written detailed accounts of the Jarrow March. In literacy pupils looked at related literature including, *The Machine Runners* by R Westall, *I Am David* by A Holm, and *Stonestruck* by H Cresswell. This learning was further enhanced through a history day based solely on looking at life of the evacuees, the air raids and the Blitz. An activity booklet prepared for the pupils helped to make this a very enjoyable and worthwhile learning experience. The pupils made themselves an identity card, ration book, and gas mask. They sang wartime songs, including *Run Rabbit Run*, heard the sirens, and sought safety in the Anderson shelter that a few pupils had made and erected, where they continued to sing as the noise of the bombing raids was heard. Pupils spoke of a mixture of emotions; 'It was scary', 'I was petrified,' 'The best day ever.' All the pupils thought they had learned a great deal as the result of the well-organised day full of practical activities. The result of these practical activities was good learning for all the pupils.

139 Leadership is good and the co-ordinator is aware that planning needs to reflect all the aspects of the National Curriculum. She is well aware of the standards in history in the school. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and the day-to-day assessment as yet are still not in place.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

140 Standards in ICT are in line with those to be expected at the end of both key stages. The school was criticised in the previous report for the lack of opportunity for pupils to use ICT in other subjects. This issue has now been tackled and schemes of work include ideas for using ICT across all subjects which is a good improvement since the last inspection.

141 Pupils at both key stages use the computer to help them with their work in a wide range of other subjects. Year 1 pupils use the computer during literacy lessons to help them with their sentence work. In Year 2 higher attaining pupils programme the roamer to make several moves and turns in succession. In science they show on the computer where the wires need to go to make an electrical circuit work. They use a paint type program in their art lessons and pupils with special educational needs use a computer program to help them to learn letter blends. Year 3 pupils learn about plants through the computer during a science lesson and send and receive emails. Year 4 pupils practise writing the correct tense and word processing skills in their literacy lessons. They also learn how to programme the roamer and plot a route which will help it to escape from a cave. They are familiar with data handling and produce graphs through the computer. In mathematics they make effective use of calculators. Year 5 pupils use a design programme to create garden designs as part of the design and technology work and produce colourful labels for their books. Year 6 pupils produce good quality slides for presentations. They also work confidently with spreadsheets in mathematics, use a light sensor in science and produce colourful anti-smoking and drinking posters. In all of these activities pupils show appropriate levels of skill for their ages and abilities. Pupils with special educational needs use the computer to reinforce their knowledge of multiplication tables and make satisfactory progress. Because ICT is used effectively in most subjects pupils' learning is satisfactory throughout the school and pupils build upon what they already know.

142 Too few actual ICT lessons were seen to be able to make definitive judgements about standards of teaching and learning. Where it was seen, teaching and learning were at least satisfactory. Teachers were confident with the computer and how to use the programs they had selected for the pupils to work with. They managed to offer appropriate levels of support while also supervising the rest of the class. Concern was expressed in the last report over the amount of time that was available for each pupil to use a computer. The school intends to resolve this issue by creating a computer suite in the near future to enable teachers to take whole classes at a time for ICT lessons. This would be a positive move to further improve ICT skills throughout the school.

143 Leadership in ICT is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is responsible for monitoring teaching and learning within the subject and has improved the scheme of work in line with the recommendations of the last inspection report. Pupils' progress is monitored by assessing one element of the subject each term and recording the findings on a sheet devised by the local education authority. This shows which pupils have and have not learned what was intended and which ones are high achievers. There is less evidence of how this information is used to ensure that future work matches the needs of the particular pupils it is aimed at.

MUSIC

144 Since the previous report, when music failed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, significant steps have been taken to improve the provision in the school. Standards of achievement have improved. Attainment is now meeting the nationally expected levels at the age of seven and eleven in listening and appraising, and performing, including singing. Skills in composition remain the weaker of the elements. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. A scheme of work for music has now been put

in place which is providing a more structured framework for teaching and learning. All classes have regular music lessons, including a singing lesson. In addition, pupils in Year 6 learn to play the recorder. All pupils have preparation time for mass. Provision of musical instruments has improved to enable opportunities for pupils to compose and play their own music, using tuned and untuned instruments, but resources are still not as good as they should be. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

145 Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but good teaching and some unsatisfactory teaching was also observed in Key Stage 2. Pupils sing with enjoyment and enthusiasm. Singing is reasonably tuneful but is not particularly demanding in the mixed year singing lesson in Key Stage 1. Insufficient guidance is given, for example, in hymn practice, to improve the quality of singing and extend the range of hymns. Most pupils listen carefully and follow instructions, although a significant minority in Year 3 find it difficult to concentrate fully in the lesson. Teachers reinforce musical terminology well consolidating pupils' knowledge and understanding of such terms as 'pitch', 'dynamics', 'tempo' and 'duration'. In Year 3 pupils clap rhythms confidently but a lack of attention to teaching of singing skills results in standards which are below those expected for pupils of this age. Teaching in this lesson is unsatisfactory because the teacher lacks confidence and her knowledge in the subject is not secure. As a result, some pupils lose interest and misbehave. The classroom assistant was not used effectively in this lesson.

146 In Year 4 good cross-curricular links are made to literacy as pupils build percussion and narration into the story of 'Cinderella'. The good teaching in this lesson extends their musical vocabulary so that pupils understand 'time signature' and are familiar with musical notation. Pupils refine their performance in singing and percussion through careful planning which enables them to practise and improve, attaining satisfactory standards. They work well collaboratively and the lesson proceeds at a good pace. The local authority's music service makes a very good contribution to developing the skills of more able pupils in Year 4 in the lesson seen. Very good teaching for a small group ensured they gained a clear knowledge and understanding of the differences in tuned and untuned instruments. They developed their knowledge of time signatures, working out the number of beats in a bar. They performed well together, led by an able violinist and made good gains in their learning.

147 In Year 5 there is a good focus on music from different cultures as pupils listen to music from the British Isles and a steel band from the Caribbean, and learn songs from the Caribbean such as 'Mary Ann'. They use different instruments to create a 'layered' sound effect. Year 6 pupils work together well in groups to create simple compositions successfully. Good intervention by the teacher helps pupils to reflect different moods and to improve their performance. Pupils work hard and co-operate as a team because the teacher has good behaviour management strategies to ensure they remain focused on their task. She consolidates earlier learning on layering sound. Through involving pupils in critical evaluation of each group's performance she enables them to value each other's contributions and improve the skills acquired.

148 Pupils listen carefully to a range of different music and respond with interest. A minority of higher attaining pupils demonstrates good skills in composing and performing but this element of the curriculum remains below the expected level, in spite of good gains in learning, because skills have not been consistently built upon over time. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others in their class and most enjoy their music time.

149 At present, there is no one with an overview of music throughout the school. Three people share responsibility for music in different years. This is unsatisfactory as it does not promote good continuity or enable appropriate monitoring of the subject. The lack of any assessment strategies is also unsatisfactory.

150 Music makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal, particularly social and cultural development. However, there remains a lack of awareness of composers and music from a range of cultures. Pupils have further opportunities to play the recorder through a lunchtime club and a small group learn to play the violin with the local authority's music service. Although significant improvements have been made to the music curriculum there are still missed opportunities to extend pupils' musical knowledge, understanding and appreciation. For example, through regular listening to recorded music at the beginning and end of assemblies. Also opportunities to perform both within school and in the local community are limited.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

151 By the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, standards in physical education are in line with national expectations and pupils make satisfactory progress at both key stages. This was not the profile at the last inspection where standards were above National Curriculum expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards and progress, however, vary from good to unsatisfactory across both key stages. No difference in standards between boys and girls was observed and the standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs was at least satisfactory, several excelling at sport and gymnastics.

152 Pupils in Key Stage 1 are aware of the need for sensible and safe behaviour during lessons and respond positively to the teachers' instructions. They work enthusiastically in games and exhibit an awareness of space, using this appropriately to link a variety of warm up activities, including skipping, hopping and jogging sequences. They invariably enjoy all their work and co-operate well with each other. They exhibit increasing control and co-ordination when developing skills of sending, retrieving, receiving and passing a ball. They apply these skills to small team games with varying degrees of success. However, the quality of teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Occasionally there is too much time spent on exploration and instruction with less time on activity and the lesson is not physically demanding and pupils are not challenged enough. Whilst teachers invariably circulate to give instruction and guidance, individual and group demonstration is insufficiently used to highlight quality in performance and to provide pupils with improved or refined skills and techniques. A common omission is the lack of pupil involvement in appraising each other's performance and in planning group activities. Consequently they lack ideas as to how to improve their skills. Pupils are able to work independently and with a partner but only the best teaching gives them sufficient time to reflect on their performance and to move the work forward.

153 The provision for physical education is better at Key Stage 2. The teaching is at least satisfactory overall. Generally, teachers' expectations are higher and there is evidence of good continuity across each year group which ensures that teaching is consistently focused on developing skills, knowledge and understanding. In gymnastics, most Year 6 pupils can hold their weight on different parts of the body with considerable control. They work well with partners and in small groups, with a variety of equipment to create counter tension and counter balance poises. They link these to form a coherent sequence of smooth movements to form a pastiche. Teachers use individual demonstration well to highlight quality in performance. Pupils observe each other's performance and share ideas. The pupils' achievements in games activities are satisfactory overall. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher's effective planning and organisation helped pupils to improve their throwing, passing and catching skills linked to movement and time. These were taught systematically using a variety of exercises, each one requiring higher levels of control and concentration. An element of competition was introduced with group activities which created further opportunities to practise the skills acquired. By using appropriate demonstration techniques and by allowing pupils to appraise and refine their own performances and that of their peers,

the teaching ensured that opportunities for improvement were created. However, too little time to practise and refine skills and team strategies prevented significant progress from being achieved. Whilst some groups face increased challenges, a significant number of activities are not physically demanding and thus a number of pupils work well within their capabilities and are not realising their full potential.

154 Games are restricted through lack of a designated playing field but pupils are able to successfully compete against other schools in football, cricket, rounders, netball and athletics. A small range of extra sporting activities takes place at various times of the year after school, some with parental assistance, for boys and girls. The school also has links with local professional teams to help generate further interest in these activities. All the Key Stage 2 pupils have access to these programmes. The annual residential activity in Staffordshire is very popular with Year 6 pupils, introducing them to outdoor and adventurous activities.

155 Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 learn to swim. As pupils have to walk to the local pool lessons are occasionally missed due to poor weather conditions. Pupils receive instruction from their own teachers together with a designated swimming instructor. At the time of the inspection, pupils had been without a pool instructor for one and a half terms. Despite this, by the time they leave school, almost all pupils can swim a minimum of 25 metres, many also achieving higher distance awards and skills certificates.

156 The headteacher, who is the temporary co-ordinator, leads predominantly at Key Stage 2 to promote good teaching but is not as active at Key Stage 1, where the teaching needs to be better. Despite the good progress in developing a written policy document for the whole school and in adopting the Dudley Physical Education Scheme, its impact reflects the variation in quality between the work of the two key stages. Whilst planning is satisfactory, there are no formal, structured assessment procedures to inform future lesson development and to determine the school's future priorities for physical education. Whilst classes are observed, this is infrequent and the co-ordinator has no viable means of monitoring the impact of the quality of teaching and learning over time. The majority of staff are unfamiliar with dance as a structured programme and this is a weakness in the overall provision.