

INSPECTION REPORT

CROCKETTS LANE INFANT SCHOOL

Smethwick, Warley

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 103941

Headteacher: Mrs P Mitchelhill

Reporting inspector: Mr M Naguib
4323

Dates of inspection: 11 – 15 June 2001

Inspection number: 194230

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	County
Age range of pupils:	3 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Crocketts Lane Smethwick Warley West Midlands
Postcode:	B66 3BX
Telephone number:	0121 558 1659
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor D Cooper
Date of previous inspection:	11 – 14 February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4323	M Naguib	Registered inspector	Science	The school's results and achievements
			History	How well the school is led and managed
			Geography	What sort of school is it?
			Equal opportunities	School improvement
			English as an additional language	
9009	V Bradley	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development
				The school's care for its pupils
				Partnership with parents
27990	M Sanger	Team inspector	English	Teaching and Learning
			Information communication technology	
			Art and design	
			Music	
			Foundation Stage	
20007	T Neat	Team inspector	Mathematics	Curricular and other opportunities
			Design and technology	
			Physical education	
			Religious education	
			Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Crocketts Lane Infants School is a small multi-ethnic community school with 136 pupils aged four to seven years and a Nursery with 39 full-time equivalent (fte) places. The school is situated in the ethnically diverse Soho Victoria ward of Sandwell which is an area of socio-economic deprivation. The immediate locality of the school comprises industrial and commercial buildings, a recreational park and dwellings for the elderly. Many families live in rented accommodation but the incidence of private housing is rising due to redevelopment in the area. However, more than half of the pupils admitted to the school are from outside the immediate neighbourhood of the school.

The school is organised into five class groups, one of which has a mixed age range (Years 1 to 2). The Nursery class has 76 children, 37 in the morning and 39 in the afternoon. All Nursery children attend for half a day.

Pupils of Indian descent make up 28% of the pupils; 24% are of African-Caribbean origin, 23% are white, 16% are of dual heritage, 6% are of Pakistani origin and 2% whose origins are in Bangladesh. Thirty-nine per cent of pupils, above the national average, are known to be eligible for free school meals and 31% come from homes where English is spoken as an additional language. Most of these receive additional language support. Eighteen per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, including three pupils who have a statement of special educational need due to physical disability. The school population has changed since the last inspection. Children enter Nursery well below nationally expected standards with very low levels of attainment; however, a smaller proportion of children in Nursery are eligible for free school meals compared with those in Year 2.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good and effective school which actively promotes social inclusion and equal opportunities for all pupils. Pupils leave school achieving standards which are in line with national expectations having made good progress as a result of good teaching and the very good leadership of the headteacher, with her strong drive and commitment to raise standards.

The headteacher, staff and governors have a shared vision about improving standards. This is a popular school to which pupils enjoy coming and where relationships are excellent. The school is well regarded by parents and the local community. It has improved significantly since the last inspection and gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards compare favourably with national averages. Compared with similar schools, standards in reading and writing are well above average and above average in mathematics.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good. The governing body is very effective. The school makes good use of the resources it has.
- Teaching throughout the school is good overall.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. Provision for their cultural development is good. Pupils' enthusiasm for the school is excellent. Their attitudes to school, their behaviour and personal development are very good. Relationships are excellent.
- The school knows what it does well and what needs to be further developed. It is very effective in monitoring and evaluating its performance and taking effective action. Its data collection and analysis is thorough and helps set targets, decide on priorities and improve pupils' standards. It makes for very effective school development planning.

What could be improved

- Attendance and punctuality of those pupils who are regularly absent or late.
- Some aspects of the organisation of teaching in the Foundation Stage.
- Provision for particular groups of pupils (higher attainers, the gifted and talented and those for whom English is an additional language).

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection in 1997. Teaching has improved and is now good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed; there have been significant changes in teaching staff. The monitoring of teaching has improved.

Good improvements in information and communication technology (ICT) have also been made. Standards have improved and are now satisfactory. Pupils have greater access to computers. Statutory requirements are now met.

Systems for assessment and record keeping have been streamlined without losing their quality and effectiveness. The school has set clear and appropriate targets and this has raised expectations. Targets are regularly reviewed and these are having a positive impact on standards. The very positive partnership between the headteacher, governing body, staff and parents provides a very good foundation for further development.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	E	E	D	A
Writing	D	D	C	A
Mathematics	D	E	C	B

Key

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

Children enter Nursery with very low levels of attainment and make very good progress to achieve expected standards in literacy and numeracy by the age of seven. They have made good progress in Nursery and Reception classes to achieve standards below those expected by age five. In 2000, standards in reading and writing were well above average compared with similar schools. Standards in reading are below the national average and average in writing. Standards in mathematics have been rising and are above the average for similar schools, and in line with the national average. Overall, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved over time. The school's performance in science teacher assessments was close to the national average.

Standards in ICT have improved and are now average. Standards in all other subjects (art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music, physical education and religious education) are generally in line with expectations. The involvement of the school in the 'Healthy Schools' scheme is having a good effect on the fitness of pupils. The school exceeded last year's targets for reading, writing and mathematics. This year more challenging targets have been set; inspection evidence suggests it is likely to meet these if account is taken of pupil changes in this small school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils clearly enjoy coming to school. They work with great interest and enthusiasm in their lessons. They are being skilfully helped to be, and to see themselves as, successful learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; behaviour in lessons and around school is very good, in response to the clear expectations and support of adults in school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; most pupils take pleasure in contributing fully to the life of the school. They work and play together well and the relationships in the school are a great strength.
Attendance	Attendance is improving but still unsatisfactory. Attendance of most pupils is good but some are regularly late to school.

In lessons, pupils sustain concentration well; they enjoy their work and are interested in it. They form very good relationships, and all pupils are fully included in all activities. Pupils work well together in pairs and in groups. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds mix harmoniously. Levels of attendance are adversely affected by a few pupils' extended absence during term time, and by some pupils' medical conditions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

All 47 lessons seen throughout the school were at least satisfactory (100%); almost two out of every three lessons (64%) were at least good and one in ten (11%) were judged to be very good. The teaching of English, including literacy, is mostly good. The resulting quality of pupils' learning and their progress are consequently good and lead to results in national tests that are in line with national averages and very good compared with similar schools. The teaching of mathematics, including numeracy, is also of a good standard, with more than three quarters of lessons in Years 1 and 2 judged to be of good or better quality; a third were very good.

Particular strengths of teaching throughout the school include very good planning and teamwork between teachers and support staff, good questioning techniques to help pupils think carefully about answers and a healthy pace of lessons. In many of the best lessons seen these ingredients enabled all pupils to take a full part in the lesson and make good progress. Another very important factor is that the headteacher and other staff have high expectations of the standard of work and behaviour; pupils respond well to knowing what is expected of them

through the targets set. In lessons where teaching was no better than satisfactory teachers did not set sufficiently challenging tasks or use time most effectively. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and when they are encouraged to find things out on their own they do so well. They are interested in their work and usually concentrate for extended periods of time. All these aspects contribute to making the quality of learning good; pupils develop the essential confidence in their ability to learn.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good; the school provides a rich curriculum for all pupils. All National Curriculum requirements and those for teaching religious education are met. Provision of activities outside of teaching time is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good; the provision is very well organised and support is very carefully targeted. Every effort is made, with success, to make sure that pupils with statements of special educational need have complete access to the full range of learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision when pupils are targeted for support is good overall. The school's arrangements to review regularly the needs of individual pupils to ensure those who need support are identified early and supported at all stages is, on the whole, satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. Pupils work very well together and show care and respect for each other. Provision for cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well; all members of staff know their pupils well and are very committed to supporting their learning and personal development. The school is a safe, secure and happy place.

Very good records of pupils' attainment are kept and these help to raise standards in the school. The school makes good arrangements to involve parents in their children's education. It also makes good use of homework to help raise standards. The annual report sent to parents about their children's progress provides a clear picture of their development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; the headteacher provides effective leadership that is focused on raising the levels of achievements of the pupils through improving the quality of education that the school provides. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and the rest of the senior management team, subject co-ordinators and the other adults in the school community, including the office and caretaking staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well; the governing body is knowledgeable and very committed to the development of the school. Financial planning based on the school's agenda for improvement is very strong. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good; the headteacher and senior management team keep all aspects of the school's performance under continuous review. The responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is shared well and effectively discharged.
The strategic use of resources	Good; the school makes good use of its current resources and specific grants are targeted very well on raising standards. The school actively seeks to get best value for money.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are good although sometimes there are too few teaching spaces for the amount of small group work that the school seeks to provide.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The views of the 76 parents who returned completed questionnaires and of the 36 who attended the pre-inspection meeting with the inspection team were taken into account.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards that pupils attain are high. • Pupils enjoy coming to school. • Parents feel welcome in school. • Parents feel every pupil is valued and respected. • The school is approachable. • Behaviour at the school is very good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No areas of concern were raised.

The inspection team agrees with all these views of parents and carers. The overwhelming support for the school by parents and carers is clearly evident.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Overall provision for children under age five is good. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress as a result of the very good provision made for them when they start school. Children enter the Nursery at levels well below national expectations. Children are assessed at the start of Reception which shows attainment to be below national standards. They enter school well below nationally expected standards and make good progress to achieve standards below national standards when they enter Year 1. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also make good progress. The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils and gains their interest.
2. The progress made by pupils as they move through the school is good. Children enter the Nursery with very low levels of attainment. They have limited general knowledge and understanding of the world, variable levels of physical development, immature personal and social skills and underdeveloped communication, language and mathematical skills. They make good, and at times very good progress to reach standards below those expected for five-year-olds when they transfer to Year 1.
3. The good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2 so that many pupils are attaining the standards expected by age seven.
4. In the year 2000 tests for seven-year-olds, the school's results in reading were below the national average and average in writing. When compared with similar schools, results in reading and writing were well above. Evidence gathered during the inspection through observing lessons, examining pupils' books and talking to pupils shows that standards are in line with those typically found in primary schools for seven-year-olds. Good progress is made throughout Years 1 and 2.
5. The National Literacy Strategy for developing pupils' skills in reading and writing has been established effectively and builds on the school's own progression for teaching basic skills. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that the strategy is having a positive impact on standards in English. Results in reading and writing have improved since 1999.
6. Pupils make good progress in developing skills and knowledge in English, except for the higher attainers, who make satisfactory progress as they move through Years 1 and 2. Within planned activities and work completed in class there is an insufficient challenge and expectation for these pupils.
7. By age seven, pupils show levels of attainment in speaking and listening that are in line with those typically found for the age group. Good progress is made in lessons where pupils are encouraged to question, think and explain. By age seven, the majority of pupils have moved from having a low attention span to being able to listen carefully and contribute orally in lessons. Most pupils enjoy reading and can explain what they

like about their books. Higher attainers read fluently and with expression. They can talk about their preferences for reading. Attainment in writing is average for seven-year-olds. By Year 2, higher attaining pupils use interesting vocabulary and most words are spelt correctly. They use basic punctuation appropriately, including speech marks. Pupils are beginning to create interest for the reader by including more adjectives in their writing. They are increasing the range of language structures they use. However, insufficient emphasis is placed on broadening vocabulary and language experience. Standards in handwriting are broadly in line with national standards.

8. In mathematics, the results of the national tests in 2000 showed that, when judged against the performance of all schools, standards were average by age seven. However, in comparison with similar schools, they were above average. The proportion of pupils achieving a higher than expected level of performance was comparable to that in most other similar schools. Standards have been rising over the last few years at a similar rate to the national trend. The rate of increase between 1999 and 2000 was much greater than in most other schools, due to the strong impact of the implementation of the National Strategy for Numeracy on the quality of teaching.
9. Children start school with very low levels of mathematical skill. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception, but attainment is still below the levels normally found by the time they are five. Most make good progress through Years 1 and 2, including pupils with special educational needs and those whom English is an additional language. However, scrutiny of the pupils' past work shows that the gains made by higher attaining pupils are not as great as they should be. This is due in part to teachers not expecting enough of them. These pupils are sometimes asked to work unnecessarily through the same tasks as average attainers before trying more difficult activities. Also, the form used to plan numeracy lessons in Years 1 and 2 does not encourage teachers to identify separate tasks for higher attaining pupils. Nevertheless, taken overall, pupils' achievements are good.
10. Pupils do best with their number work. Average attaining seven-year-olds work confidently to order numbers to 1000. They understand that subtraction is the opposite of adding. Higher attaining pupils make patterns using multiples of ten and discuss what they are doing in mathematical language.
11. Standards in science in the current Year 2 are broadly average. In their work on sound, teachers challenge the pupils well and many understand, for example, that sound is caused by vibration. Teachers place an increasing emphasis on pupils undertaking their own experiments and investigating for themselves. This is leading to improving the pupils' enquiry skills. Pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking to others to help clarify their understanding, and they emphasise important aspects of a scientific approach. Pupils show a good understanding of life processes and living things and materials and their properties. Their understanding of physical processes is improving. The school's performance in science teacher assessments in year 2000 was close to the national average.
12. Pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school. In the best lessons, pupils are provided with structured opportunities that enable them to build on their past learning and they have

the additional support of a learning support assistant or teacher. They have individual education plans and teachers take good account of these when planning their work.

13. Pupils with English as an additional language also have individual learning plans. They make good progress. Support for children under five is consistently targeted to help with the acquisition of English. The bilingual assistants make a very effective contribution to the progress of these pupils. Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. This is highly dependent upon the support of the specially trained teacher or learning support assistants.
14. Comparing the year 2000 test results with the previous year, the school has demonstrated higher rates of improvement in reading, writing and mathematics compared with the national rates of improvement in these subjects, with improvement in mathematics being particularly marked (8% points). In reading and writing, performance was in line with national averages (slightly above in reading) and well above in mathematics. In science, based on teacher assessments, although performance in 2000 improved slightly (84%) compared with the previous year (82%), it was still below the national average (88%). Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that pupils are likely to achieve standards close to the national average.
15. The school's performance in the reading and writing tests was well above average in comparison with similar schools. In reading, in comparison with all schools nationally, the school's results have improved from being well below average in 1998 and 1999 to below average in 2000. Compared with schools in similar contexts, the school achieves high standards in reading and writing. In writing, the school's results have also improved from being below average in 1998 and 1999 to being close to national averages in 2000.
16. The school's performance in the mathematics tests was above average in comparison with similar schools. In mathematics, the school has also shown similar improvement. In 2000 performance in mathematics was above national averages, compared with below average results in 1998 and well below in 1999. Compared with schools in similar contexts, the school also achieves very good standards in mathematics.
17. A good deal of improvement has been made in mathematics since the last inspection. For example, the quality of teaching has improved and the curriculum has been successfully adapted to take full account of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, the use of ICT in mathematics lessons is still unsatisfactory.
18. In science, at the time of the last inspection, teachers assessed standards of attainment by age seven to be average compared to those of other schools nationally. Over the past four years standards have improved, although few pupils achieve higher levels. Improved teaching overall, effective planning for science and very good systems for assessment have contributed. The school has identified results in science to be lower than desired and targeted the subject as an area for development. Although the performance of boys is better than the national average, the school is also aware that girls at the school do significantly less well than boys or the national average. Standards of work seen during the inspection and teacher assessments for Year 2 indicate that this cohort is likely to achieve standards close to the national average this

year. The school has set appropriate and challenging targets based on the previous year's performance and predictions of performance of individuals or groups of pupils.

19. Since the last inspection, standards achieved by pupils by age seven have improved significantly. Overall, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 2 or above in reading, writing and mathematics has improved more than the national rate of improvement and standards are now in line with national averages in writing and mathematics but below average in reading. Standards have improved particularly in the last year when the school has pushed up results in reading and writing. In mathematics, the school has made tremendous improvements and significantly exceeded the national rate of improvement. Last year it produced results which are now in line with the national average. The school has been successful in achieving these improvements through focussing on raising boys' attainment to bring their performance in line with that of girls and setting challenging targets for each class, individuals and groups of pupils, with the involvement of parents. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has helped the school to focus on setting appropriate targets for pupils.
20. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and make good progress. A number of pupils, for example, are taken off the special educational needs register each term due to the progress they make. The gains made by pupils with physical disabilities are enhanced considerably by the efforts of staff to ensure that they participate in as many activities as possible, including physical education lessons.
21. The school has set appropriate statutory targets for pupils' attainment in accordance with requirements following consultation with the local education authority. Performance data is analysed. Each year's national test results are compared with the previous year's performance and national averages. Aspects of teaching and subject areas requiring development are identified as a result of analysis. Good use is made of national statistical data to make comparisons with similar schools and national averages. Successful strategies and action plans are identified to be incorporated into the school development plan. Targets are identified. Good use is made of baseline assessment data to profile pupils in Year 1 to assess value added in Reception and to predict future performance.
22. This assessment is used to inform grouping of pupils according to their learning needs. Data is analysed by gender and ethnicity. Information is effectively used for targeting pupils. Performance in reading, numeracy, spelling and science are used for analysis and targeting. This is planned to be extended to ICT. Information is also used to identify areas for development in teaching, inconsistencies in year group performance and where support is needed. This has also enabled monitoring of class, group and individual performance and setting targets. The school is very effective in collecting, analysing and using the data for performance management.
23. In ICT, standards are satisfactory by age seven and pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge and skills. All pupils have opportunities to become familiar with computers and their uses through working in the school's well-appointed computer network room. ICT skills and understanding are being taught in a systematic way. These skills are being used well in English and satisfactorily in mathematics.

They are not yet being effectively used in other subjects.

24. Pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The subject contributes well to the development of pupils' literacy skills.
25. In art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education, standards are in line with those expected for pupils age seven. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop their literacy skills and extend their vocabulary in these subjects. The hall, which is used for physical education lessons, is too small especially for pupils in Year 2. This restricts the progress that is made in some physical education lessons. However, the involvement of the school in the Healthy Schools scheme is having a good effect on the fitness of pupils, and the opportunities to take part in vigorous exercise during playtimes under the supervision of the lunchtime supervisors is an important part of this provision.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

26. Children enter the Nursery with personal and social skills well below average; many are immature. However, their behaviour and attitudes are very good, and children respond well to the praise and encouragement given.
27. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, show a high degree of interest in their work, and persevere well with the tasks set. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors, and to each other. A strength of the school is the excellent relationships evident between all pupils.
28. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils try hard to please their teachers, and work well together. They sustain concentration well over long periods of time, but in just a few of the lessons observed pupils began to lose concentration when the task, such as a listening task, was too extended. They then, however, responded well to a change in activity, and resumed their natural interest and involvement.
29. The attitudes and behaviour of the majority of pupils throughout the school show that they think carefully about their actions and are very conscious of the impact these have on others. They wait patiently for other pupils to make their contributions in lessons, and listen to each other well. Of particular note is the successful inclusion of those pupils with physical disabilities in all activities, and the care and respect for these pupils shown by others. Their peers treat pupils with special educational needs with great respect. Staff and pupils alike value their opinions and achievements. The pupils themselves have a positive self-image and are integrated very well with the rest of the school. The 'Friendship Post' in the playground is used well at playtimes and is successful in ensuring that pupils are aware of someone who is feeling the need for support and friends to play with; it is clear that pupils notice and respond well. Pupils work well together in pairs and in groups. When given opportunities to develop independent learning and research skills pupils respond well, for example Year 2 pupils in a literacy lesson exploring differences between traffic past and present.
30. Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour, to which pupils respond well.

They enjoy receiving stickers to reward good work, good effort and good behaviour. They particularly enjoy the Friday afternoon reward assemblies, when caring heart awards are made to those having shown extra effort in caring and sharing with others.

31. During the last year, the school has not excluded any pupils.
32. There is no racial tension evident in the school; pupils from different ethnic backgrounds mix harmoniously and through their own choice. There are good levels of supervision on the playground areas and lunchtime supervisors have received training in supporting and organising play activities. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour on the playground are recorded and appropriate action taken by the headteacher.
33. Pupils on the school's register of special educational needs are fully and successfully integrated within the mainstream school. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are very good, and they respond well to the specialist support staff.
34. Pupils of all ages are given good opportunities to take responsibility. The youngest children in the Nursery are keen to help tidy away toys and activities. Older pupils take responsibility as Lunch Bunch monitors to lay and clear lunch tables, and collect litter from the school grounds. Pupils treat resources and equipment with respect, and take care of them.
35. Attendance remains below the national average, but there is very little unauthorised absence. The school continues to identify the need to increase attendance levels as a priority.
36. Attendance has improved over the last academic year by one percentage point, but is still below 95%. The school continues to stress to parents the need for regular attendance at school. Some pupils with special educational needs require hospitalisation because of their physical disabilities, and the small numbers in school means that the absence of one pupil, for example one having an eye operation, has a detrimental effect on the school's attendance figure.
37. The attendance record of most pupils is good. There is regular monitoring of pupils' attendance, in conjunction with the education social worker. The progress of some pupils is adversely affected when long holidays are taken to visit the countries of family origin. Work is given to pupils who have long periods out of school, and pupils' attainment is tested before they leave and on return to ascertain the level of extra support that they will need to recover some of the ground lost. A few pupils regularly arrive at school late, despite regular and consistent reminders of the need for a punctual arrival. These late arrivals have a negative impact on the first lesson of the day, so that a prompt and effective start to the school day is not always possible.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

38. Overall, the teaching observed during the inspection was of a good standard. In lessons where the under-fives were being taught (Foundation Stage), teaching was judged to be good. In the Year 1 and 2 classes, teaching was also judged to be good. Evidence collected from the teachers' planning records and from the pupils' books, indicates that

the teaching observed during the inspection is typical of that usually found in the school.

39. There are seven classes in the school. The Nursery and three Reception family groups make up the Foundation Stage of education. There are three classes in Years 1 and 2; there is one Year 1 class, one class with Year 1 and Year 2 pupils and one Year 2 class. Although teachers teach their own class for most subjects in Years 1 and 2, a system of grouping by prior attainment is used for some literacy and numeracy lessons. Within the week of the inspection the organisation of teaching was different from that typically found in the school, due to the absence of a member of staff and the use of supply teachers.
40. During the inspection, 47 lessons or part lessons were observed. In total this amounted to 28½ hours of teaching and learning. Teaching was judged to be very good in five lessons, good in 25 lessons and satisfactory in 17 lessons. No teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teaching of good or better quality was observed in some lessons in both stages of education. The percentage of lessons where teaching was judged to be good or better was 64%. Hence the judgement that teaching was good.
41. Common strengths that were identified in the lessons observed where elements of teaching was judged to be very effective were:
- the very good relationships between pupils and teachers;
 - very good organisation and management of pupils, so that teaching time is maximised;
 - the way teachers used questions and explanations to help pupils develop their ideas;
 - very effective support for pupils with special educational needs, through planned activities and the support of learning assistants;
 - very effective support for pupils with English as an additional language, when targeted at those pupils in need of this specific support;
 - good subject knowledge;
 - a good range of teaching methods led by teachers;
 - knowledge about what pupils can do, gained from regular assessment;
 - lessons which went with a swing;
 - the provision of activities that made learning relevant to pupils;
 - high expectations about behaviour and effort.
42. These strengths played a major part in the good progress made by the pupils.
43. Common weaknesses identified in lessons observed where elements of teaching were judged to be less effective were:
- teachers' low expectations about the progress pupils would make in the lesson, especially in independent tasks;
 - a long time spent by pupils listening passively;
 - insufficient challenge provided for pupils, especially the higher attainers;
 - lack of purpose within tasks that were not led by teachers;
 - lack of targeted support for pupils with English as an additional language;

- a slow pace to the lesson.
44. Overall the quality of teaching observed for children under five was good. In total, 20 lessons were observed. This equated to ten and a half hours of teaching. In two lessons the teaching was judged to be very good, in 12 lessons it was good and in the remaining lessons teaching was judged to be satisfactory.
 45. Overall, the teaching observed in the Nursery was of a good quality. The teacher is well supported by two qualified nursery nurses and learning support assistants, who are clear about their role and have a positive impact on the progress made by pupils. The work of the bilingual learning support assistants is particularly effective with children for whom English is an additional language. Elements of teaching that were judged to be very good were where there was direct teacher guidance, for example the teacher demonstrated how to hold a pencil, and then wrote a message on a paper teddy. The pupils copied her grip and were confident to make their own marks, including some recognisable letters, and made very good progress. In the three Reception groups the teaching observed was always satisfactory, often good and sometimes very good. Where teaching was judged to be good there was direct guidance by the teacher. Good questioning and good subject knowledge, leading to clear explanations, helped children to gain new understanding. In a lesson in the computer room children rapidly gained an understanding of how to use the shape icon. In lessons where children moved to independent or free choice tasks, many quickly lost interest and did not make progress; for example, in the Nursery, during free choice activities, some children wandered from one activity to another and did not persevere with tasks. In some lessons in Reception, where children sat passively for half an hour, they naturally became inattentive and missed out on the learning. Homework is given to pupils regularly through the week. The activities often involve finding things out with the family, and are appreciated by parents.
 46. Overall, the quality of teaching that was observed in Years 1 and 2 was good. In total, 30 lessons were observed. This equated to 18 hours of teaching and learning. In three lessons teaching was judged to be very good, in 14 lessons it was good and in 12 lessons teaching was judged to be satisfactory.
 47. Very good teaching was observed in classes when teachers were developing the pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy. The teachers had good subject knowledge and taught the basic skills well. The lessons were well planned and the clear structure in the sessions enabled pupils to make very good progress. In a number of lessons, learning was made relevant by using experiences gained from visits to the locality, as with a visit from a long-standing resident of Smethwick, or observations around school. When the pupils moved to group activities the instructions given by the teacher meant that pupils got on with the task with no fuss, and they were able to work independently. Group tasks provided pupils of differing abilities with work to extend their learning. These lessons had real purpose. Good questioning to make them think and very good management of pupils were also common features of good teaching.
 48. Where teaching was less effective there was a lack of expectation about the progress pupils should make. Planning did not make clear what pupils of differing ability would learn, particularly higher attainers. Activities were either too hard or too easy. For

example, when some pupils were asked to add missing words to sentences, some could not read all the words. There was often a lack of challenge and expectation for higher attaining pupils. In a science lesson on sound, for example, higher attainers were given a task that did not challenge them sufficiently. These weaknesses were seen mainly within the group work.

49. Good teaching was observed in all the Year 1 and 2 classes and in a number of subjects including English, mathematics, science, ICT, geography and art and design. In these lessons the materials provided were stimulating and the pupils were keen to be involved in the activities; making steady progress in their learning. In a Year 1 art and design lesson pupils were using photographs of the places they had visited on the High Street. They had a range of materials from which to choose. These had been purposefully chosen by the teacher to help pupils with their work. For example, pupils chose plasticine to represent the statues they had seen. All the pupils made good attempts and produced work of good quality. The bilingual learning support assistant provided very effective support for pupils with English as additional language and for those with English language difficulties. Some pupils were struggling to explain the roof of the building. She was able to provide and explain the word 'dome'. The teacher provided good support for individual pupils, and made sure that pupils' work was valued and celebrated at the end of the session. Some less effective teaching showed weaknesses because of a lack of subject knowledge, and insufficient teaching of specific skills. This was seen, for example, in physical education.
50. The teaching observed in English was good. Ten lessons or part lessons were observed where pupils were developing their language skills. Teaching was judged to be very good in two lessons; good in seven lessons and satisfactory in one lesson. The school is making good use of the new strategy for raising standards in reading and writing. The best lessons are well planned by teachers, and the pupils find the materials provided stimulating. Teachers make particularly good use of the strategy when teaching both reading and writing. There is a strong focus throughout the school on teaching the pupils the basic skills of reading; in Years 1 and 2 there is a strong focus on writing sentences. In a lesson where teaching was very good, the Year 1 and 2 pupils were fully involved in finishing the story of *The Bear Under The Stairs* and they made very good progress in a short period of time. The lesson went with a swing.
51. The teaching observed in mathematics was good. Eight lessons or part lessons were observed in mathematics. Teaching was judged to be very good in two lessons, good in five lessons and satisfactory in one lesson. A common characteristic of the good teaching was the way that the teachers used questions which made pupils think about their answers. For example, in the Nursery, when children were ordering numbered teddy bears, they were asked: "*Where do we start? Can you find me a 2? What will come next?*". In a Year 1 and 2 lesson pupils were asked "*How are you going to do this?*" when asked to solve problems. They were then helped to find a step-by-step process to use when solving problems. A good range of activities was used at the start of lessons to help with remembering number facts. In Reception pupils used cards with frogs jumping to help them understand taking away. In Year 1 and 2, pupils had to find the answer to number problems within 20 and show the answer on a number fan, and in Year 2 quick-fire questions were targeted at different ability groups. Such apparatus as number lines and number squares were used to strengthen pupils' learning. Where

teaching was less effective it did not sufficiently challenge the higher attainers and there was a lack of expectation about the progress that pupils should make, particularly in group work.

52. Overall, in all the other subjects of the curriculum, the teaching observed was judged to be satisfactory; much was judged to be good. No judgements are made about the overall quality of teaching in design and technology and music due to insufficient evidence.
53. Good teaching was observed in seven lessons in Years 1 and 2. This occurred in a number of subjects including science, ICT and art and design. There was good subject knowledge and pupils clearly understood the purposes of the lessons. Good use was made of resources. Pupils behaved well and enjoyed their learning. Teaching that was satisfactory (nine lessons in all) in this range of subjects had elements of weakness. These included a slow pace to the lessons, not enough challenge and insufficient directed teaching to strengthen skills.
54. The progress made by pupils as they move through the school is good. Children enter the Nursery with very low levels of attainment. They make good, and at times very good progress to reach standards below those expected for five-year-olds when they transfer to Year 1. The good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2 so that many pupils are attaining the standards expected for seven-year-olds by the end of Year 2.
55. Overall, the good progress made by pupils is a reflection of the quality of teaching. Work in the pupils' books shows that over a period of time they are developing their knowledge, skills and understanding in English and mathematics. In other subjects, particularly ICT and science, pupils also make good progress. The school has rightly concentrated on developing skills in reading, writing and number work, and progress in these areas is good for all pupils except the higher attainers. The work indicates that the school's results for this year will be similar to last year's results.
56. In just over a half of the lessons observed during the inspection, the pupils were judged to have made at least good progress in their learning. Very good progress was observed in Reception in the computer lesson, in mathematics in the Year 1 and Year 1 and 2 classes, and in an English lesson in the Year 1 and 2 class. Good progress was observed in Nursery and Reception; and through a range of subjects including English, mathematics and science, ICT, and art and design lessons. In English and mathematics lessons, pupils were observed to make good progress. This was often due to the way the lesson was structured, enabling different groups of pupils to get on with their work.
57. Pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school. In the best lessons, pupils are provided with structured opportunities that enables them to build on their past learning and have the additional support of a learning support assistant or teacher. They have individual education plans and teachers take good account of these when planning their work.
58. Pupils with English as an additional language also have individual learning plans. They make good progress. Support for the children in the Foundation Stage is consistently targeted to help with the acquisition of English. The bilingual assistants make a very

effective contribution to the progress of these pupils. In Years 1 and 2 good progress continues although this is highly dependent upon the support of the specially trained teacher or learning support assistants.

59. A number of pupils who show higher levels of attainment did not always make enough progress in all lessons. Work seen over time from books shows this also. Too often the work provided for this group did not recognise their level of attainment and they are not sufficiently challenged to extend the amount and quality of work they complete.

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

60. The curriculum for pupils throughout the school is broad, balanced and relevant. It contributes well to the standards that pupils achieve. The planning which guides teachers in providing good quality learning opportunities is highly structured and very effective. A system of challenges is set out, with different expectations for higher, average and lower-attaining pupils, each half term. Overall provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and ensures there is cohesion and good progression for children when they enter Year 1. Children's personal, social and emotional development is very effective and rightly given high priority. The quality of provision for developing children's communication, language and literacy skills is also very good. Speaking and listening skills are developed in all aspects of work. Provision for the development and awareness of mathematical language and children's physical development is good. Provision for children to develop knowledge and understanding of the world around them and their creative development is satisfactory with less emphasis placed in these areas of the curriculum. The curriculum meets fully the statutory requirements for what should be taught and takes proper account of guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. As a result, pupils' learning is sequenced well and teaching is based securely on what has already been taught. There are good strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills.
61. A particularly effective feature of the planning of learning opportunities is the provision made for the personal, social, health and citizenship education, including sex and drugs education. This is integrated very well into the overall planning. It adds further structure to the very good personal support and guidance the school provides for its pupils.
62. The curriculum is socially inclusive and provides equal opportunities for all, including those for whom English is an additional language. The good use made by the school of links with the local, ethnically diverse community and opportunities for pupils to work in the local area help in this. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is also good, with full access for these pupils to the National Curriculum, including those with physical disabilities. The learning opportunities for those with physical disabilities is especially effective. For example, staff work hard to ensure their full participation in physical education lessons, including gymnastics. Pupils are taught alongside their peers. The highly structured planning system identifies clearly expectations for lower attaining pupils. The Code of Practice is fully implemented and all statutory requirements are met. However, planning does not always take account of the different needs of higher attainers and there is no policy for

identifying pupils who are gifted and talented.

63. Strong links with other schools and organisations add significantly to the quality and range of learning opportunities the pupils enjoy. Those with a nearby special school and the adjacent Nursery school are especially productive.
64. The school provides a satisfactory range and number of extra-curricular activities. In this respect, the inspection team disagrees with the minority of parents who feel that this is not the case. Inspection findings show that the provision that is made is comparable to that in most similar schools.
65. The provision the school makes for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very effective in furthering their overall personal growth. Spiritual development is fostered very well in the everyday work of the school, including in lessons, where pupils' ideas and opinions are valued and respected. Very good promotion of spiritual awareness and self-knowledge comes through assemblies, well-planned acts of collective worship and religious education lessons. Acts of collective worship add greatly to pupils' religious knowledge. For example, Year 2 act out the story of Rama and Sita as part of an assembly performed for the rest of the school and parents. Pupils are given opportunities to appreciate stories from Christianity and other faiths, particularly those represented in the local multi-faith community. A very effective system for promoting good behaviour, and the very good role models provided by all staff members are key parts of the very good provision for social and moral education. The school clearly teaches right from wrong, and enquiries made by the inspection team show that parents are very happy with the attitudes and values taught by the school. The school's work towards achieving a nationally recognised Healthy Schools Award ensures that pupils are beginning to understand the need to make choices relating to their well being. Pupils' awareness and appreciation of their own and other cultures are fostered well. Cultural provision is mostly good, but the school recognises the need to draw on the local culture of the area to enrich the curriculum. By acknowledging and celebrating the diverse cultures of its pupils, the school is effectively creating a climate in which other cultures and religions are valued. This was clear in a design and technology lesson in which several groups included temples in their designs for a model town.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

66. Teachers know individual pupils very well, and are fully aware of their physical, emotional and intellectual needs. The headteacher, teachers and support staff all provide caring and thoughtful support to pupils; they are accessible and responsive to pupils' needs. They respond to them in a positive and very supportive way. Very good relationships between all members of staff, including the headteacher, teachers and support staff, effectively encourage a very positive atmosphere in the school, which provides a very good learning environment. Through these very positive relationships, pupils' personal and social development is effectively but informally monitored. The recently introduced Records of Achievement is intended to provide an effective means of more formally recording and celebrating pupils' personal and social development and achievements.
67. The school successfully creates a climate for good behaviour by having high expectations. Pupils value the merit system, and enjoy celebrating their own success and that of others in the weekly Good Work Assemblies. They respond well to the praise and encouragement freely offered.
68. Attendance records are kept in accordance with statutory requirements. Attendance is below the national average, but there is little unauthorised absence. The school makes strenuous efforts to ensure that the reasons for absence are known, and has recently introduced a system of telephoning parents when pupils are absent to confirm the reason for their absence. Attendance is regularly monitored, and there is regular effective liaison with the education welfare officer.
69. The school continues to emphasise to parents the detrimental effect on their children's progress when extended holidays are taken in term time. The headteacher interviews parents who request holidays during term time to stress the possible adverse effect on pupils' progress. Homework packs to be completed while the pupil is absent are provided, and tests of pupils' attainment are carried out before and after such extended absences, so that appropriate support can be offered to minimise the adverse effect on pupils' progress.
70. The school's concerted efforts to improve attendance levels have resulted in a one per cent rise during the last academic year, but attendance is still less than 95%. The school continues to acknowledge as a priority the need to raise attendance levels further.
71. The school has very good procedures to monitor the academic progress of individual pupils in all areas of the curriculum. There are individual pupil profiles in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Six pupils are identified and targeted in each class each day for individual assessment, and the results of those assessments are carefully recorded over time to give an ongoing record of how pupils are progressing. Targets in literacy and numeracy are regularly set for groups of pupils of differing ability within each class, which are then further refined to suit individuals. These targets are regularly reviewed and shared with parents at the termly consultation evenings. Very good quality individual plans are drawn up for pupils with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language who are targeted for support. Specific targets made up of small steps contribute well to the progress made. Monitoring of the progress

made by these pupils is very good. Reviews are held at appropriate intervals for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language and all parties involved in caring for the pupils concerned participate.

72. Analysis of assessment information is extensive, including monitoring the achievement of different ethnic groups, and is effectively used by the school to promote the achievement of all pupils. The assessment information regularly recorded by teachers and support staff is very effectively used to inform curricular planning, and to modify short term lesson planning when necessary. However, assessment records do not always distinguish between different groups of pupils, for example, higher attainers or pupils for whom English is an additional language
73. There are satisfactory child protection procedures in place which meet statutory requirements. The teacher designated as having responsibility for child protection has undergone appropriate training, and shares that training with all staff on a regular basis. Liaison with appropriate support services, and with social services, is good.
74. The health, well being and safety of pupils are given an appropriately high priority. There are very good levels of care for pupils with physical disabilities and for pupils who require regular medication. There are regular inspections of school premises to identify any hazards, and appropriate risk assessments are carried out.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

75. Parents' and carers' views of the school are very positive, and the inspection team agrees with these positive views. Attendance at the meeting for parents before the inspection was good, and the number of questionnaires providing information was good. Parents confirm that they are welcome in school, and that they can approach the school with any problems or concerns. Parents consider that standards of attainment are high, and are pleased about the overall development of pupils at the school. Parents confirm that pupils enjoy coming to school, and behave well. Parents feel that the school very successfully helps to raise the self-esteem of pupils. Pupils are successfully encouraged to become mature and responsible. Parents feel that they are well informed concerning their child's progress. They consider that the school is well led and managed.
76. The school successfully continues to encourage a very good working partnership with parents and carers. Parents and carers are supportive of the school, and appreciate the care and support given to their children. Parents feel that they can approach the school with concerns and problems. Parents are able to have informal discussions with teachers at the end of the school day. Parents and carers appreciate the importance the school places on pupils trying their best.
77. Attendance at termly parents' meetings is good, and parents have a good opportunity at the termly consultation evenings to review the targets set for their child, and agree new targets.
78. The school has a very good relationship with the Nursery that many pupils attend, and there are good arrangements to ensure a smooth introduction into the school's Nursery

and Reception classes.

79. Parents and carers are able to be involved in their children's education by hearing them read, and by supporting learning activities, for example spellings to be learned. Following consultation with parents, homework is set regularly three times weekly, and recent further consultation has discovered that parents would like homework to be increased. Parents confirmed that homework set is relevant to work being done in school, and that most pupils enjoy the tasks set. When the literacy and numeracy projects were introduced, these were explained at parents' evenings.
80. The quality of information available to parents regarding their child's education and progress is extensive and good. Parents receive regular information concerning the work to be covered during the term, homework that will be set, and the literacy and numeracy targets for their child. There is good provision for parents whose first language is not English through bilingual support assistants, who are able to answer queries and provide appropriate support for those parents. Parents are very well informed about special educational needs. Those with pupils in this group are fully involved in decisions about their care and progress from the time that concerns are first raised. The individual education plans have a section that clearly identifies what the parents or carers can do at home to help improve their children's progress.
81. Pupils' annual reports give parents and carers a very good range of information concerning what their children know and can do. They give good details of the work covered during the year, information on how the child has progressed, and suggest ways in which their child can improve further.
82. Weekly newsletters give parents information concerning school events and achievements, including attendance figures for each class. The school prospectus gives parents and carers a good range of useful information. The prospectus and the Governors' Annual Report to Parents conform to statutory requirements.
83. A small number of parents provide very valuable support within the school, and the school is actively seeking to increase the number of parents helping on a regular basis. In particular two fathers provide valuable role models when they regularly read stories to all classes within the school. The help provided by all these parents is valued and very much appreciated by the school. The 'Friends of Crocketts Lane' organise social and fundraising activities, and provide valuable support and resources for the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

84. The headteacher, who is well supported by the deputy headteacher, provides very good leadership. They have helped to form good links between the school, parents and the local community. All staff and governors support them very well.
85. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are new to their posts since the last inspection. They have since worked well together and form an extremely effective partnership. It is their particular shared view of how children learn best that has helped make the school popular and successful. The school's results are all the more significant considering the attainment of children when they enter the Nursery and that

many pupils have English as an additional language.

86. The impact of the very good leadership is clear from the school's improvement in standards in the last few years. All parents agree that the school is well led and governors have every confidence in the headteacher's leadership.
87. The headteacher has a vision, widely shared by staff and governors, that the school can significantly improve the opportunities for its pupils. The headteacher's crusade to raise standards and detailed planning for improvement based on a strategic overview has already led to significant improvements since the last inspection in terms both of national test results at seven and the quality of education provided. Key ingredients of the school's strategy are the recognition of the importance of raising the self esteem of pupils, maintaining clear and consistently high expectations of work and behaviour and providing the sharply focused support that enables pupils to meet these expectations.
88. The deputy headteacher has been given leadership and management responsibility for major areas of the work of the school, including the curriculum and assessment. She discharges these and her teaching duties very competently and provides invaluable direct support to the headteacher. In particular, she has led the thorough and effective revision of the school's assessment and recording procedures. Her work as the special educational needs co-ordinator has a very good impact on the standards that pupils achieve. Her hard work as the physical education co-ordinator, especially in relation to developing physical education for children in the Foundation Stage, is having a positive impact on standards in the subject.
89. The senior management team individually and collectively provides strong leadership. All aspects of the school's performance are subject to careful analysis and kept under continuous review. Subject co-ordinators provide good leadership for their subjects. The appropriate, negotiated and well-delegated allocation of subject co-ordinator responsibilities by the headteacher is having a positive impact on standards in most subjects. For example, the English co-ordinator very effectively carries out her role, and with other members of the senior management team, has played an influential role in raising standards. She has a clear view of strengths and weaknesses in English within the school. The work of the mathematics co-ordinator also has a positive effect on the standards that pupils achieve. Her checks to assess standards, and to judge the quality of teaching and planning, are a key element in this. The co-ordinator for science, who also co-ordinates the Nursery and Reception, is very effective in her role. She ensures there is cohesion and progression for the children through her leading the planning, looking at their work and monitoring their achievement and progress. She organises the day-to-day routines and promotes good communication between home and school. The co-ordination of science is also marked by the joint planning that occurs between class teachers with the close involvement and good guidance of the co-ordinator. The recently appointed ICT co-ordinator has had a strong impact on the provision for the subject, and on raising standards for pupils. Systematic and rigorous analysis of pupils' short-term and long-term achievements leads to priorities for whole school development. There is a considerable effective monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work and of classroom observation and support. This makes a very important contribution towards raising pupils' levels of achievement and valuing the work of colleagues.

90. Progress towards each key target in the school improvement plan is carefully monitored by the headteacher. The responsibility for raising levels of achievement and improving the quality of education provided is very effectively shared and staff are able to recognise the contribution that they and others are making. Subject co-ordinators are enthusiastic and give good leadership directed towards improving provision and raising standards. When given the opportunity, they use the time that they are allocated for monitoring and support productively.
91. Staff evaluation of school performance is undertaken annually. Necessary action is identified and informs the school development plan. Performance of the management team is also analysed annually and personal teacher evaluations are undertaken.
92. Governors are fully involved and committed to the development of the school. They show a keen awareness of the issues that the school faces, for example the need for monitoring to ensure that no pupils are denied opportunities that the school offers due to language, learning or physical needs. The governing body is totally committed to the school's policy of inclusion and is fully supportive of the integration of pupils with physical difficulties and of the support provided for pupils learning English as an additional language and those with special learning needs.
93. Governors are frequent and welcome visitors and give generously of their time in support of the school. Parent governors in particular have welcomed the opportunity to visit classes. The partnership between the governing body, headteacher and staff is very strong and effective in moving the school forward. Governors have been fully involved in dealing with the key issues from the last inspection. Progress has been good but the governors recognise that there is more to do with respect to ICT.
94. Governors are very knowledgeable and supportive of the school and its aims and provide strong leadership. They are becoming increasingly involved in the work of the school. They have regular contact with the school and actively review the performance of the school and support educational priorities through careful financial planning. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities.
95. The very impressive and comprehensive school development plan, seen as 'the engine' by the headteacher, is the key working document for the school. Regular reviews, at which staff and governors check progress against targets and identify improvement targets for the following year, are very effective.
96. Financial planning is strong. The finance committee, the headteacher and the local education authority's finance officer work together effectively to keep spending under review and to set budgets in line with school improvement objectives. Specific funds allocated to the school, for example, to raise the attainment of pupils for whom English is an additional language or to help the school to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs, are used effectively. The school now actively and successfully seeks to obtain best value for money.
97. Staffing, accommodation and resources are good overall and on the whole have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The school has appropriately

identified the replenishment of resources in science and increasing the range of artefacts it uses for the teaching of religious education as part of its further development for these subjects. The hall, which is used for gymnastics lessons, is too small especially for pupils in Year 2. This restricts the progress that is made in the lessons concerned. Sometimes there are too few teaching spaces for the amount of small group work that the school seeks to provide.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

98. The headteacher, governors and staff should continue to raise standards, by:
- i improving attendance and eliminating the late arrival of pupils to school by:
 - continuing to work closely with parents, the school welfare service and the wider community, in the context of the school's success in improving attendance and reducing lateness. (*paragraphs 35-7 and 68-70*).
 - ii improving some aspects of the organisation of teaching in the Foundation Stage by:
 - reviewing the management of time to ensure that children do not sit passively in lessons for too long;
 - providing more purposeful, independent active learning tasks to improve progress for children engaged in independent and low focus activities. (*paragraphs 43, 45, 108, 110, 114, 118 and 143*).
 - iii improving provision for particular groups of pupils (higher attainers, the gifted and talented and those for whom English is an additional language) by:
 - providing greater challenge for the higher attainers by ensuring they are consistently given appropriately differentiated tasks in lessons;
 - ensuring that all pupils, particularly those who have English as an additional language are appropriately identified early and supported systematically throughout school;
 - further improving teaching where this lacks pace and challenge and does not stretch the higher attainers sufficiently;
 - ensuring that the progress of pupils when they are not being taught directly is monitored more systematically in lessons. (*paragraphs 9, 43, 48, 51, 55, 62, 72, 135-8, 142, 147, 149 and 158*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	5	26	17	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	38	136
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	5	62

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	38

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	42

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	19	18	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	16	18
	Girls	15	15	18
	Total	31	31	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (79)	84 (82)	97 (79)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	18	17
	Girls	15	17	14
	Total	31	35	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (82)	95 (82)	84 (82)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	19
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	23
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	19
Any other minority ethnic group	13

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	192

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	38
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	422,560
Total expenditure	434,219
Expenditure per pupil	2,680
Balance brought forward from previous year	22,555
Balance carried forward to next year	10,896

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	171
Number of questionnaires returned	76

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	92	8	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	87	13	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	82	18	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	70	26	4	0	0
The teaching is good.	89	11	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	72	28	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	12	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	91	9	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	77	23	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	86	14	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	83	17	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	34	3	0	5

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Thirty-six parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector. Parents think that the standards that pupils attain are high. Their children enjoy coming to school. They feel welcome in school and feel the school is approachable. Parents feel every pupil is valued and respected. They consider behaviour at the school to be very good. The inspection findings support the positive views of the parents. Parents' overwhelming support for the school was evident in the views expressed in the questionnaires, at the parents' meeting and other meetings with parents.

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

99. Overall provision for children under-five is good. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress. They enter school well below nationally expected standards and achieve below national standards when they enter Year 1. This represents good progress overall. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also make good progress. The curriculum overall meets the needs of the children and gains their interest.
100. The Nursery class provides education for 39 children on a part-time basis, either in a morning or afternoon session. Three Reception family groups provide full-time education for 55 children.
101. Very good provision is made for children when they start school. Home visits are made by Nursery staff to establish early relationships. These are followed by opportunities for children and their parents or carers to visit the Nursery before they start school. In September, the children are introduced in small groups for half a day. After a short time, all the children are in school. Parents and carers also meet with Reception staff just before their children enter Reception. During the autumn term, teachers assess the children. This is linked to the steps in the national guidance known as early learning goals. The results of the assessment, carried out during the first two weeks in the Nursery, show what the children can do and help staff to plan and teach the next steps of learning. On entry the children are well below national expectations. Children are assessed at the start of Reception; attainment is below national standards. Assessments are again made as children move into Year 1 and, whilst their attainment is below national expectations, they have made good progress. In addition to end of year assessments, staff regularly assess the progress children are making in learning. This is recorded in a systematic way and shared with parents at least termly.
102. The needs of children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, are identified through assessment, often with the support of the bilingual learning support staff. Through knowledge of the children's needs, good provision is made using learning support assistants and teaching staff in Nursery and Reception. These groups of children make good progress. An example of the effective support seen during the inspection was when a bilingual assistant was able to use both English and Punjabi to help children take part in role-play.
103. The good quality teaching in the Nursery has been maintained since the last inspection when teaching was judged to be good in the Nursery and satisfactory in the Reception classes. In the Reception classes, teaching has improved and is now good overall.
104. The co-ordinator for the Nursery and Reception is very effective in her role. She ensures there is cohesion and progression for the children through leading planning, looking at children's work and monitoring their achievement and progress. She organises the day-to-day routines and promotes good communication between home and school.

105. The accommodation for the under-fives is good. Rooms are colourful and bright and divided into areas where the children can learn quickly. Displays are effectively used to celebrate children's work and provide a focus for learning. The outdoor area available for the Nursery, and the playground for the Reception classes, provide secure and suitable play areas. Resources are good for all areas of experience.

Personal, social and emotional development

106. Children's personal, social and emotional development in both Nursery and Reception classes is given high priority, to very good effect. Many children enter the school with immature skills in this area. By the time they leave the Reception class, most are achieving the nationally expected goals. This is the result of very good teaching. Children make very good progress.
107. This progress reflects the skilful teaching in both the Nursery and Reception classes where children are constantly encouraged to feel confident about what they can achieve. The teachers' relationship with the children and care for them are both very good.
108. Children soon learn the teachers' structured routines and gain in confidence. They quickly learn to work and have respect for each other. Circle time, when children consider, amongst other things, each other's thoughts and feelings, builds on this good work. Many children concentrate, especially when under the guidance of an adult. All staff have very high expectations of children's behaviour. Most respond well, learn to know what is right and wrong quickly and why they should behave in the correct way. During role-play based on a meal at the Chinese restaurant a squabble over a bowl was quickly spotted. The teacher then showed the pupils how to take turns, and they were able to do this independently during the remainder of the activity.
109. In Reception children are able to share within small groups. They show concern and also delight, especially when celebrating each other's success. In an outdoor play session they showed that they could follow the rules of a simple tig game with great enjoyment.

Communication, language and literacy

110. On entry to Nursery, children's communication, language and literacy skills are well below those expected of children of a similar age. The quality of teaching and learning in this area is very good. This helps the children to make very good progress. Although some are still below the standard typically found nationally when they move from the Foundation Stage, about half of them are likely to be close to the nationally expected standard; and nearly a quarter will have achieved this and be working within the Year 1 curriculum. Teachers and support staff plan their activities well, taking into account the needs of the children, particularly those with language and special educational needs. This is having a good impact on learning. However independent tasks are often less purposeful.
111. Good clear notices, labels and instructions cards with pictures and writing help children to recognise and appreciate the need to read and write words. Good emphasis is placed

on correct pencil grip and pencil control. In the Nursery there are good examples of marks on paper as the children attempt to write. Most children are beginning to write single letters from their name, and higher attainers can write their names independently. These achievements are built on in a clear systematic way in the Reception classes. Lower attaining children are beginning to write using recognisable letters, and the higher attaining children are now able to write simple three letter words, and use the sounds of letters to help them spell words.

112. Books have a very high profile in all work. Children have been introduced to and can tell the stories of many books. Whilst reading *Grandpa, Grandpa* the children loved to join in with the repetitive lines: “*Grandpa, Grandpa, come with me. Let’s go fishing in the sea*” and some children joined in with reading the other parts of the book. Children were able to identify the title and respond to questions about *Big Bears Can*. Most Nursery children know about the cover, title and how to read and handle a book. Many ‘pretend read’ and can say why they like a book. The higher attainers show enjoyment in reading and use story language in their pretend reading such as *Once Upon a Time*. As a result, children in Reception classes handle books well. By this stage most children are able to read a small number of common words such as *my, the* and *was*. Many are able to build up simple words using sounds, and the higher attainers are confident early readers. They use their knowledge of sounds, memorised words, pictures and sense to read fluently and with understanding. There is a library and book corner in both classrooms with a very good selection of books. Children also visit the school library in groups to choose and return books; they are encouraged to take books home. Reading diaries are used to record books read, and time is given to talk with children about the books they have read.
113. Speaking and listening skills are developed in all aspects of work. Children know rhymes and songs, and show enjoyment in the rhythm and repetition of words. When they enter school many lack confidence in speaking and will often point and say single words. Throughout Nursery and Reception children are encouraged to talk about what they are doing. In the role-play room a Nursery child was pretending to be a plumber and the bilingual assistant was asking questions to extend his imagination and language. In Reception children listen well and whilst being eager to make their contributions have learnt to take turns. During the week of the inspection the structure of lessons led to children sitting listening for half an hour. Quite naturally they became inattentive, lost interest and made few learning gains in the latter parts of these sessions.
114. Overall the teaching of language and literacy is very good. Children make very good progress when being guided or taught by an adult. However, when children are involved in independent activities they often play without purpose and wander from activity to activity in the Nursery. In Reception they quickly lose interest in their independent tasks. As a result their progress is much slower in these activities.

Mathematical development

115. When children enter the Nursery class their attainment in mathematics is well below that of children of a similar age. Teaching for the development and awareness of mathematical language is good. This helps children learn and make good progress. By the end of the Foundation Stage all but the lower attaining children will be on course to

achieve standards expected for children at this stage in their education. The higher attainers will have achieved them and be working beyond.

116. The highest attaining children in the Nursery can count to at least ten and recognise the numerals, sort and match objects and have knowledge of shapes and colours. Others count to ten but show little idea about the value of numbers. In the group activity at the start of the session they enjoy being chosen to wear a number and colour apron. They stand up and activities about sorting, counting and ordering follow. Knowledge is built on and extended in Reception classes. Most pupils can count to 20, order numbers within ten and find one more or less. The higher attaining children can count to 30, know how to count in twos and can add and take away within ten.
117. Children's understanding of shape is good. They create shape pictures, find shapes using the computer, and construct objects with flat and solid shapes. Children soon learn to recognise a circle, square, triangle and rectangle. By Reception they can describe the number of sides and corners for each shape. In the Nursery children are introduced to comparative terms such as *short and long*. During a group water play session three children were asked to fill, empty and half fill containers. There was a clear purpose to their activity, and they concentrated well on the task and were able to talk about what half full might be. In the Reception classes children extend this learning using terms such as *longer and shorter, lighter and heavier*. They use simple mathematical language when positioning the animals in front of, below, or at the side of, and are able to recognise and recreate simple patterns. Good use is made of rhymes and songs to help children memorise number facts. One group really enjoyed singing the *Baker's Bun* song, practising subtraction.
118. Children are taught and supported well though adult led sessions, but in independent tasks quickly lose attention. During an independent activity a group of Reception children were asked to match coins from their purse to number cards. After a few minutes they lost interest.
119. Displays encourage understanding of number and celebrate the work done by the children. Equipment is put out to provide experiences for learning during children's free choice time. This includes numbers for sequencing, number charts, washing lines of numbers, number books, number jigsaws and boxes of shapes and numbers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

120. Provision and teaching for children to develop knowledge and understanding of the world around them is satisfactory. Lighter emphasis is placed on this area of learning, with less time spent on teacher-led activities. Children's learning is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress. By the time they enter Year 1 many are moving towards achieving the nationally expected level. The majority of children enter school with very little general knowledge. Teachers build on children's natural curiosity and help them to understand well the world in which they live. During the story of Noah, in a Reception lesson, children were fascinated by the idea of a serious flood.
121. Scientific ideas are developed through the range of planned opportunities provided in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Children enjoy experimenting with torches to

see how to switch them on and off and where you could see their beam. In a teacher led session good questioning helped children to investigate simple circuits for lighting a bulb. During free play there is an opportunity for children to use magnets to find out what happens. A boy realised that a magnet could not pick up all the objects on the table but it would attract some. There was real delight as he enjoyed seeing which of these the magnet could pick up, and he was eager to show others his discovery.

122. Children are given good opportunities to develop their skills in ICT. There is a computer in each room, and children practise mouse control, and strengthen literacy and numeracy skills. Nursery children use a cassette player independently to listen to stories and music. They gain knowledge of the computer and confidently control the mouse to create patterns on the screen. For example, in the Nursery children were able to use the mouse effectively to click on *stamp* and draw in the *Painter* program. In Reception small groups of children were moving a remote controlled car. Skills are extended in the Reception classes through regular timetabled sessions in the computer room. Children use the *Black Cat Painter* program to create pictures. They use the mouse to click and drag, learn to use the paintbrush and can use the shape and colour icons as well. One child drew a beautiful elephant using two circles for the body, and the paintbrush for four legs and a long trunk. He knew how to print his picture. Another child showed real concentration to improve his driving of a remote control dumper truck around some furniture. The teacher explained and taught new technical vocabulary very effectively.
123. Children have developed an understanding about other cultures and beliefs through listening to stories and carrying out activities. In the Reception group children were able to talk about promises and decide on one of their own. These children demonstrate that they are developing a good understanding of place and time and recognise differences in weather when, during circle time, they are encouraged to talk about where they have been or are going on holiday. They name places such as Spain, Tunisia and America and talk about travelling in an aeroplane as well as travelling by train to the seaside. They are able to distinguish between hot and cold climates and changes in clothes they need.

Physical development

124. Before entering the Nursery children have had different experiences through which to develop their climbing and balancing skills. For some these are very limited, others visit parks with equipment and have built up skills. However, the children have had less opportunity to use small objects and tools for practical tasks. Teaching of this aspect of the children's development is good and children of all abilities make good progress. Opportunities for children are carefully planned to develop their manipulative skills. Writing is developed in a systematic way and children make very good progress.
125. The large, well maintained and secure outside play area is a recent resource for the Nursery, and helps children to become aware of their limitations in moving and balancing. Nursery children can use the slide and climbing tables to extend their skills. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to extend the range of large outdoor equipment. In Reception, children play games with a good awareness of space, safety and the new skills they are learning. One child was delighted when he found he could make a large

hoop spin as well as roll.

126. Physical education lessons are good and teachers make good use of demonstration to help children improve their movements. In a lesson seen during the inspection, children learnt to move and balance, they used space well, and showed good concentration. However, they had restricted opportunity to practice and extend the balancing skills that they found difficult.
127. The children's dexterity is developed through the handling of small objects such as lacing, construction toys and using scissors. During the week of the inspection there was no evidence of the use of malleable materials such as dough. The children in the Nursery class learn to work things out for themselves as they piece together jigsaws and construction materials. In the Reception classes children develop skills through more directed activities, where they are often provided with a purpose for making things. The activities provided increase confidence and develop the children's use of a range of materials and tools including scissors, glue, paintbrushes, pencils and crayons. In most aspects of this area of the children's development, the majority attain the standard expected at the end of the Foundation Stage.

Creative development

128. This area of learning is given less emphasis than some other areas and creative opportunities seen during the week of the inspection were limited. The teaching and provision are satisfactory, as is children's progress. The majority of children will be securing the later stages of the standard expected by age five. Children enter school with little imagination and poorly developed language skills. This area of learning helps children to develop these skills using their full range of senses.
129. Children enter school with poor brush control and some of the pictures of themselves show their immaturity when using paint. Staff provide children with directed activities focusing on technique and motor control. During the inspection children used paint, pastels and crayons but there was very limited opportunity for them to use or explore materials except under close direction. This limited the creative part of their learning. In Reception, children were shown a range of landscape photographs and prints. They were shown how to smudge pastels for a soft effect, and how to vary brush strokes. In response, a small group worked well and tried out the suggested techniques.
130. In the Foundation Stage teachers build the singing of songs into many lessons such as numeracy, literacy and religious education. All children have at least one guided music session a week, and there are opportunities in free choice to listen to music from a tape, and to experiment with playing instruments. All the children enjoy singing nursery rhymes and a range of other songs, joining in enthusiastically and responding with actions. There is a display of instruments, and in free choice children experiment. One child listened to music on the tape player and clapped her hands in delight and then in time with the rhythm. During a music lesson children enjoyed learning to clap and play rhythm patterns for their names. This was a very structured and prescribed session where children had turns, but were eager to take their learning forward through their own responses. This opportunity was not given and therefore their gain in creativity was limited.

131. Staff create good role-play opportunities for children. In the Nursery there is a role-play room set up as a home. It had 'the three bears' in residence during the inspection week. In the Reception room there is 'Crocketts Lane Café'. When guided by a clear purpose to which children can respond they make good learning gains in speaking, listening and developing their imagination. Where there is a less purpose, children lose interest and soon walk away from role-play situations.
132. Children have many opportunities to create their own cards and make models from junk materials. This they do very well, and many reach levels of attainment in line with that expected for children in the Foundation Stage. The more able children can explain what they have created, and why they have made a particular object.

ENGLISH

133. In the year 2000 tests for seven-year-olds, the school's results in reading were below the national average and average in writing. When compared with similar schools, results in reading and writing were well above. Evidence gathered during the inspection through observing lessons, examining pupils' books and talking to pupils shows that standards are in line with those typically found in primary schools for seven-year-olds. Good progress is made throughout Years 1 and 2.
134. The National Literacy Strategy for developing pupils' skills in reading and writing has been established effectively and builds on the school's own progression for teaching basic skills. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that the strategy is having a positive impact on standards in English. Results in reading and writing have improved since 1999. Good teaching, and effective management by the co-ordinator supports the development. Standards in the important skills of reading and writing have improved in the last three years and are continuing to improve. A small number of higher attaining pupils are attaining at a level above that typical for seven-year-olds.
135. Good progress in developing skills and knowledge in English is made by all pupils, except for the higher attaining pupils, who make satisfactory progress as they move through Years 1 and 2. Within planned activities and work completed in class there is a lack of challenge and expectation for the higher attainers. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language benefit from additional support, which helps them to make good progress.
136. By the age of seven, pupils show levels of attainment in speaking and listening that are in line with those typically found for the age group. Good progress is made in lessons where pupils are encouraged to question, think and explain. In the Year 2 class pupils enthusiastically questioned a long standing resident of Smethwick and listened attentively to her answers. In a Year 1 and 2 class, pupils were asked to predict the ending to a story *The Bear Under The Stairs*, firstly with a partner, then to the class. A small proportion of pupils lack confidence or the knowledge of English readily to contribute orally. These pupils are encouraged by the teachers and when they have learning support assistance contribute well. Little emphasis is placed on broadening vocabulary. This limits the detail and preciseness in their responses. Pupils are very good at listening to each other and taking turns. Occasionally sessions of listening last

too long and pupils lose interest. By the age of seven, the majority of pupils have moved from a low attention span to being able to listen carefully and contribute orally in lessons.

137. Attainment in reading is below that typically found for pupils who are seven years old. Pupils in Year 1 enjoyed reading a story of *Big Bad Bill* together and many read with expression. The majority of pupils enjoy reading and can explain what they like about their books. Most pupils show understanding of the importance of punctuation, for example, by taking note of the exclamation mark at the end of a sentence. By the age of seven, lower attainers recognise common words and use sounds to build up words, but have difficulty in understanding what they read. Pupils with typical levels of attainment for their age can work out an unknown word by using a range of strategies, including splitting the word into parts and reflecting on whether it makes sense. They understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction and can talk about the features of a book. In the Year 1 and 2 class when reading *The Bear Under The Stairs* the pupils could explain the setting, characters and events in the story. Higher attainers read fluently and with expression. They can talk about their preferences for reading. One boy explained that he loved encyclopaedias because they told him all sorts of facts. In a literacy lesson in Year 2, a group of higher attaining readers were able to use a glossary in the book *Exploring Where You Live*.
138. Attainment in writing is in line with the national standard expected from pupils of the same age at the end of Key Stage 1. Teachers emphasise the relationship between letters and the sounds they make to develop pupils' awareness of spelling patterns and the recognition of frequently used words to support their early writing. Lower attaining pupils can build up simple words using sounds. Pupils attaining standards typical for their age are using blends of letters such as *sh, bl, ing* and spell common words such as *like, went, make*. Higher attaining pupils in Year 1 can spell common words such as *when, many, goes*. Emphasis is placed on sentence structure throughout Key Stage 1. In a Year 1 writing lesson when pupils were writing a fact file on Smethwick High Street, lower attaining pupils wrote simple sentences about likes and dislikes, such as, "*I like the clothes shop*", with support from the learning support assistant. Average attainers independently wrote and punctuated sentences such as, "*There was no art on the walls*". Higher attaining pupils wrote more complex sentences such as, "*There were horses in the old days not cars*". By Year 2, higher attaining pupils use interesting vocabulary and most words are spelt correctly. They use basic punctuation appropriately, including speech marks. Pupils are beginning to create interest for the reader by including more adjectives in their writing. They are increasing the range of language structures they use. In their factual writing about Smethwick they used titles and subtitles to organise their information. Insufficient emphasis is placed on broadening vocabulary and language experience. This hinders progress for all abilities and is reflected in their writing, which shows the use of only a narrow range of words. When language or learning support assistants are working with pupils they make strong progress in learning new words. In a Year 2 lesson looking at walls in the playground the language support teacher helped a pupil to learn *bigger* instead of *more big*.
139. Structured approaches to writing are used extensively. Word cards and other sentence making cards help pupils to gain a growing understanding of how to write a range of sentences. In the Year 2 class, pupils were using words such as *who, what, how* to start

- questions. In Year 1, pupils had prepared writing frames to record information gained from a visitor. Higher attainers had a picture of the visitor and speech bubbles in which they recorded her impression of the olden days. This structured approach is also used particularly effectively for introducing pupils to different kinds of writing, such as letter writing, explaining a process or giving instructions.
140. Standards in handwriting are broadly in line with national standards. Pupils make progress with pencil control, letter formation and positioning. Pupils had lessons in Year 2 to practise their handwriting at the start of the school year, but this has not been sustained. Some higher attaining pupils are joining handwriting in Year 2, yet other pupils do not yet consistently form letters correctly.
141. Overall, the quality of teaching observed in English lessons was good. In total six lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2, where pupils were developing their skills in aspects of English (literacy skills). In one lesson teaching was judged to be very good. In four lessons teaching was judged to be good. In one lesson teaching was judged to be satisfactory.
142. The work in pupils' books and the teachers' positive and helpful comments also indicate that teaching is generally of a good standard. In all classes, teachers use the literacy hour to good effect. They place an appropriate emphasis on helping pupils to develop an understanding of words, sentences and general text. Both planning and the use of resources, including additional adults, are strengthening teaching and enhancing gains in learning. Emphasis is placed on making learning relevant to pupils through visits to the High Street, bringing in visitors and the use of the school buildings. The Year 2 class learnt about brick bonds from a book *Exploring Where You Live* and then looked at different bonding in the walls around school. Teachers know their pupils very well, regularly and frequently assess pupils' achievements and have a clear view of their progress. A group of pupils are given bands to identify them as the 'Group In Focus' for assessment. This ensures a manageable and systematic approach to daily assessment. Teachers gear activities to pupils' differing levels of attainment so they make good progress, but do not provide sufficient challenge for higher attainers. For example, a group of pupils were asked to read an information book together. They did this with enthusiasm and confidence within five minutes and found it easy, but were not challenged at this stage to use their reading. Teachers are enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and use good planning and organisation. This leads to clear objectives, which they share with the pupils through their own explanations and the use of menu cards on each group's table. These factors, alongside good management of time and pace in the lesson enable pupils to make good progress in gaining skills and understanding. Very good relationships with and management of pupils, ensures that they are attentive, keen to learn and settle to their work quickly.
143. Features of the lessons judged to be good include the very effective use of questioning. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of individuals to tailor questions, to extend thinking and to teach new work. In response, pupils remember previous work and explain their thinking. Activities where pupils are actively involved in quick question and answer, with wide involvement or short paired tasks in preparation for feedback to the teacher, ensure full participation in learning. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to explain new learning with clarity, and pupils make rapid learning gains. Less effective teaching is evident during group work sessions where there is a lack of

clear expectation about the amount of work or level of achievement expected of pupils in independent tasks. This results in pupils lacking urgency and making slow progress with their independent task. For example, a higher attaining group of pupils were asked to read write a glossary for a list of given words, and after twenty minutes they had only completed a quarter of the task.

144. Pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs or English as an additional language make good progress overall. Teachers use their individual educational plans when they are planning lessons. Learning support teachers and assistants have good knowledge of the individual needs of the pupils and provide very good support when working with them as individuals or within a group.
145. The co-ordinator very effectively carries out her role, and with other members of the senior management team, has played an influential role in raising standards. She has a clear view of strengths and weaknesses in English within the school. Systematic and rigorous analysis of pupils' short-term and long-term achievements leads to priorities for whole school development. These are then translated into detailed action plans. Planning, pupils' work and teaching are monitored and feedback is provided. She has provided the staff with clear direction as they have worked to implement the National Literacy Strategy. A system of Gold Planning where good practice is shared through model planning, lesson demonstration and shared staff evaluation is proving to be an effective strategy for improving teaching. The wide range of planning ensures balance and coverage in a progressive way. Evidence from pupils' work shows that there is progression and consistency within year groups and between classes. The only inconsistency is within the range of work covered by Year 1 pupils in the two classes, although learning objectives are the same. Resources for English are good. The school has a good range of books, both fiction and non-fiction. Additional resources, often prepared by the school, are well labelled and stored. The school library is a good resource. However, it is part of the hall, which limits its use during some sessions. After school each afternoon there is a Library Club. There has been a Writing Fun Day and a number of fathers read to pupils and join in with cooking sessions. During the inspection a father read *The Rhino's Horn* with great dramatic effect to a group of Year 2 pupils much to their delight and enjoyment. Such activities are providing strong motivation for the pupils and increasing their enjoyment of English.

MATHEMATICS

146. The results of the national tests in 2000 showed that, when judged against the performance of all schools, standards were average. However, in comparison with schools of a similar character, they were above average. The proportion of pupils achieving a higher than expected level of performance, was comparable to that in most other similar schools. Standards have been rising over the last few years at similar rate to the national trend. The rate of increase between 1999 and 2000 was much greater than in most other schools, due to the strong impact of the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy on the quality of teaching.
147. Children start school with very low levels of mathematical skill. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception, but attainment is still below the levels normally found by the time they reach five years of age. Most make good progress in Years 1

and 2, including pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. However, scrutiny of past work shows that the gains made by higher attaining pupils are not as great as they should be. This is due in part to teachers not expecting enough of them. These pupils are sometimes asked to work unnecessarily through the same tasks as average attainers before trying more difficult activities. Also, the form used to plan numeracy lessons in Years 1 and 2 does not encourage teachers to identify separate tasks for higher attaining pupils. Nevertheless, taken overall, pupils' achievements are good and by age seven they achieve expected standards.

148. Pupils do best with their number work. Average attaining seven-year-olds work confidently to order numbers to 1000. They understand that subtraction is the opposite of adding. Higher attaining pupils make patterns using multiples of ten and discuss what they are doing in mathematical language. However, they do not choose methods to check that their work is correct. When studying shapes, pupils cut regular two-dimensional forms in half to show that they are symmetrical. However, they are not experienced in using standard units for weighing.
149. The quality of teaching is good. Eight lessons or part lessons were observed. Teaching was judged to be very good in two lessons, good in five lessons and satisfactory in one lesson. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. The good teaching has a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The teaching of basic numeracy skills is good, partly because teachers use very effective strategies. For example, they make it clear to pupils, before the lesson begins, exactly what they are intended to learn. Some teachers provide a written reminder on each set of tables. As a result, pupils can continue to focus on what they are trying to achieve. This helps the progress they make. A common characteristic of the good teaching was the way that the teachers used questions which made pupils think about their answers. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 lesson pupils were asked, "*How are you going to do this?*" when asked to solve problems. They were then helped to find a step-by-step process to use when solving problems. A good range of activities was used at the start of lessons to help with remembering number facts. In Year 1 and 2, pupils had to find the answer to number problems within 20 and show the answer on a number fan, and in Year 2 quick-fire questions were targeted at different ability groups. Such apparatus as number lines and number squares were used to strengthen pupils' learning. Firm discipline based on very good relationships between teachers and pupils means that pupils work hard, at a good rate. Pupils help their learning by behaving very well, being attentive and by supporting each other. Where teaching is less effective, not enough praise is given to reward effort and good behaviour, and marking is not effective in, for example, directing pupils to correct numerals which they have written the wrong way round. Also, where teaching was less effective it did not sufficiently challenge the higher attainers and there was a lack of expectation about the progress that pupils should make, particularly in group-work.
150. Since the last inspection, a good deal of improvement has been made. For example, the quality of teaching has improved and the curriculum has been successfully adapted to take full account of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, the use of ICT in mathematics lessons is still unsatisfactory.
151. The work of the subject co-ordinator has a positive effect on the standards that pupils

achieve. Her checks to assess standards, and to judge the quality of teaching and planning, are a key element in this.

SCIENCE

152. At the time of the last inspection, teachers assessed standards of attainment by age seven to be average compared to those of other schools nationally. Overall standards have been maintained since the last inspection because of good teaching overall, effective planning for science and very good systems for assessment. The school's performance in science teacher assessments in year 2000 was close to the national average. Standards of work seen and an analysis of teacher assessments indicate that Year 2 pupils are likely to achieve standards close to the national average this year.
153. Pupils have benefited from their exploration of scientific ideas in the early years where, for example, they enjoy experimenting with torches and investigating simple circuits for lighting a bulb. Pupils explore magnets and discover their properties of attraction. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 continue to build on pupils' experiences in the Foundation Stage by placing an increasing emphasis on them undertaking their own experiments and investigating for themselves. This is leading to an improvement in pupils' enquiry skills.
154. Standards in the current Year 2 are broadly average. Pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking to others, for example, on sources of light and sound, to help clarify their understanding. Teachers emphasise the important aspects of a scientific approach by drawing pupils' attention to the need to predict, investigate, observe and draw conclusions, for example, in a Year 2 class when finding out that sounds get fainter due to distance. This helps pupils gain better scientific knowledge and understanding. Teachers challenge the pupils well and many understand that sound becomes fainter. Some understand that sound is caused by vibration. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of light and sound are average for their age, for example, most pupils know that sounds are made in many ways and derive from different sources and that they get fainter due to distance. Pupils' work in Year 2 on the life cycle of a frog, for example, shows that they are developing a good understanding of life and living things.
155. The school has rightly prioritised pupils' development and understanding of physical processes (electricity, forces and motion, light and sound) to improve on pupils' performance in this aspect of science compared with last year. Through increasing teachers' knowledge and awareness and giving them greater confidence in encouraging pupils to investigate it is succeeding in improving pupils' enquiry skills and their knowledge and understanding in this aspect of science.
156. Although pupils record their work systematically, they do not use computers often enough to support the recording of evidence and the presentation of results. An analysis of pupils' work shows that they make good progress and achieve well from an initial low level of understanding. All pupils enjoy investigative work, and this is especially beneficial to pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs; these pupils receive good-quality support from learning support assistants, other pupils in the class or support teachers who encourage the active use of language, for example, the scientific vocabulary, by these pupils.

157. The quality of teaching is good overall, with a number of strengths that account for pupils' good progress; teachers plan together well, so they regularly share ideas about what works well in lessons; teaching is based, overall, on good subject knowledge that enables teachers to ask probing questions to make pupils think; teachers reinforce literacy skills and develop appropriate scientific vocabulary. They encourage pupils to explain their thinking to others to help clarify their understanding, and they emphasise important aspects of a scientific approach. This occurred in a Year 1 lesson on sound where the teacher stressed the importance of careful observation in listening to the sounds made by a variety of percussion and other musical instruments. This led to a good discussion about high and low sounds. Teachers use a wide range of resources that capture and hold pupils' interest.
158. Pupils throughout the school have a very good attitude. They enjoy science; they are well behaved and motivated and work co-operatively and collaboratively when asked to do so. However, during the inspection, there was little evidence of activities being distinguished by the level of challenge. This means that some higher attainers do not make as much progress as they could. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, when pupils were learning that sounds have many sources, partly due to the overlong session and the wide range of activities for small groups which were not sufficiently challenging for the higher attainers, some pupils were easily distracted or did not have sufficient attention from the class teacher to ensure that they made sufficient progress.
159. Pupils are assessed both formally and informally to measure their progress. Systematic records are kept and this works well in planning what teachers do next. Very good individual profiles have been developed and are overall used effectively.
160. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning and pupils' work. She has not as yet had sufficient opportunity to monitor teaching. She is closely involved in the development of the subject and provides valuable guidance to her colleagues. The school has appropriately identified the replenishment of resources in science as part of its targeting of the subject for further development.

ART AND DESIGN

161. The evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that in art and design standards are in line with those expected for pupils by age seven. Teachers' overall and half-termly plans show that provision is made for developing the full range of skills set out in the National Curriculum.
162. There are many artwork displays of good quality around the school that show the range of work now being undertaken in art and design. Recent in-service training on mark making has led to a recent focus on this area. Work in folders shows that pupils have experimented with a range of mark making tools and have developed an awareness of the effect of pattern. A display on *Tigers* in Year 1 shows pupils' work using charcoal, pens, and pencils. They have used very detailed and careful pattern work to show texture. In the Year 1 and 2 class, pupils have made patterns on polystyrene and used these in printing. *Swans* by CF Tunnicliffe has been used to inspire Year 2 pupils, who have used a range of tools to show the shape of swans and to represent the detail of their feathers. Other displays show that pupils gain an understanding of paint and are able to

mix colours to make shades and tones.

163. One lesson was observed where art and design was being taught. The teaching was good and the pupils made good progress. The lesson was well planned and pupils were provided with clear and effective guidance and an appropriate range of materials and photographs was used to provide visual support. This enabled them to improve the quality of their work.
164. Staff work hard to create a positive and attractive learning environment for pupils. There is good quality display which celebrates pupils' achievements. These are enhanced by colourful presentation, labels (often bilingual) and questions to make pupils think.
165. The art and design co-ordinator has led the development of clear half-termly plans that identify what pupils are expected to achieve and the activities to help them. These fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum and provide useful support for teachers. Assessments for individual pupils are made against half-termly plans. Teachers' planning and displays of pupils' work are monitored and information gained is used in a subject action plan. Hence the focus on drawing. The subject is used to strengthen the pupils' awareness of their locality and of a range of cultures. During the week of the inspection, the work of one class was related to a visit to Smethwick High Street. Resources for art and design are satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

166. Pupils achieve average standards in design and technology by age seven. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieve satisfactorily.
167. This was also the case at the time of the last inspection in 1997. Since then, teachers' confidence in dealing with this subject has been improved through in-service training. Specific guidance has been provided about the organisation of lessons in design and technology. The curriculum has been adapted to take account of the national planning guidance issued by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. This has strengthened the range of work that the pupils experience.
168. Although the school makes proper provision for teaching design and technology, it was possible to see only one lesson. As a result, no judgement is made of the quality of teaching. However, it is clear from examining pupils' written work and the planning that teachers do, that teaching is satisfactory. The teachers place appropriate emphasis on the design process. For example, pupils are asked to make a list of the things they need for making their products, and to evaluate the success of their work. After reviewing his design for a bird house one pupil in Year 2 wrote, *I would use nails instead of glue next time.*
169. In the only lesson seen, the teacher used questioning well to provoke thought about the designs the pupils wanted to achieve. As a result, pupils were clear about how they would proceed. From the outset she ensured that pupils knew what the purpose of the lesson was. This led the class to set about their tasks with confidence. All the pupils

enjoyed the tasks and co-operated well with their partners. The pupils were happy to take responsibility for choosing materials and organising their work. The more able pupils found imaginative solutions to design problems, but more could have been done by the teacher to encourage the majority to use a wider variety of methods for joining the materials. Most talked about their work as they proceeded, but few discussed ways of improving it.

170. The good quantity and range of tools and materials impact well on the progress that pupils make. So does the work of the knowledgeable co-ordinator.

GEOGRAPHY

171. Standards are judged to be in line with national expectations and all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, generally make good progress in lessons and in the work seen.
172. Two lessons were observed. The standards of work seen in pupils' books were satisfactory. Pupils have developed a good understanding of the local environmental issues and how these affect them. For example, they have considered how they should improve the environment of the school by making suggestions about the school's patio. In a Year 1 lesson, they thought carefully about ways in which they could improve the local park.
173. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the similarities and differences between their local area of Smethwick and the school's chosen contrasting locality of Bewdley. They have walked around the school, the local High Street and have been encouraged to ask questions about similarities and differences in the local landscape. Through a focus on the locality, teachers use opportunities to use pupils' historical knowledge and understanding to develop their geographical skills. For example, they know that the local Sikh temple was originally a chapel. They are able to locate it on a map. They have used maps to identify other landmarks on a map of the local area. On the basis of the limited teaching observed, teaching is judged to be usually satisfactory or better. Teachers use their good knowledge of the area to enthuse pupils and effectively develop their knowledge of the local area, understanding of geographical location and place on a map.
174. Attitudes and behaviour were very good in one lesson and satisfactory in the other. Pupils are, on the whole, well behaved and well managed by the teachers. They are enthusiastic about their local area and want to know more. Teachers provide the opportunities effectively through use of appropriate resources, such as maps and photographs of major landmarks in the locality. Pupils are motivated and listen patiently to each other's descriptions and explanations. They well work together and enjoy their visits to the local area. This further enhances the sense of belonging to the area and the local community.
175. There is no designated co-ordinator for geography but the joint planning by teachers and their confident subject knowledge and use of available resources ensures that the teaching of the subject meets requirements. Good use is made of the local geography, the High Street, the local park and field trips. These extend pupils' knowledge and

understanding beyond their locality to contrasting places such as Bewdley.

HISTORY

176. During the week of the inspection, the work of one class was related to a visit to Smethwick High Street. Through a focus on the locality, teachers use opportunities to use childrens' historical knowledge and understanding to develop their geographical skills. For example, they know that the local Sikh temple was originally a chapel. They confidently and enthusiastically locate this along with other local landmarks on a map of the local area.
177. By age seven, pupils achieve standards in line with national expectations. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieve satisfactorily. This was the case at the time of the last inspection in 1997. Since then, teachers' have gained more in confidence in history through in-service training and the specific guidance and subject leadership provided by the enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator. Specific guidance has been provided about the organisation of lessons of history. The curriculum has been adapted to take account of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority national planning guidance. This has given teachers greater confidence in teaching the subject and has strengthened the range of work that the pupils experience. The school is aware of the need to do more and has plans to effect this.
178. Although the school makes proper provision for teaching history, it was possible to see only one lesson. From this limited observation and examining pupils' written work and the planning that teachers do, the quality of teaching is judged to be satisfactory. The teachers place appropriate emphasis on the historical knowledge and skills. For example, pupils consider similarities and differences between present and past Smethwick. They are beginning to develop a good understanding of differences and similarities between past and present.
179. In the one lesson seen in Year 2, the teacher used questioning well to provoke thought about the pupils understanding of the local area. As a result, pupils were able to look at photographs of Smethwick, past and present, and identify similarities and differences. From the outset the teacher ensured that pupils knew what the purpose of the lesson was. This led the class to set about their tasks with confidence. However, the limited resources used meant that pupils were not able to enjoy the tasks as much as they could have done. Pupils co-operated well with each other when working in small groups. The more able pupils were keen to ask questions and talk about their knowledge and understanding of the local area. Most pupils talked about their work as they proceeded, but few were encouraged to extend their knowledge and understanding. This was due to the limitation of the resources available and an overlong session in which the limited objectives of the lesson did not challenge some pupils sufficiently. Consequently, the teacher had to deal with inattentiveness and some unsatisfactory behaviour. This she did effectively.
180. There are good cross curricular links with, for example literacy and geography. Pupils' literacy skills are well developed. In a Year 1 writing lesson, for example, when pupils were writing a fact file on Smethwick High Street, lower attaining pupils wrote simple

sentence about likes and dislikes, such as, “*I like the clothes shop*”, with support from the learning support assistant. Average attainers independently wrote and punctuated sentences such as, “*There was no art on the walls*”. Higher attaining pupils wrote more complex sentences such as, “*There were horses in the old days not cars*”. In a Year 1 lesson in literacy, planning and the use of resources, including additional adults, strengthen the teaching of history and enhance gains in pupils’ historical understanding. Emphasis is placed on making learning relevant to pupils through visits to the High Street, bringing in visitors and the use of the school buildings. Art and design is also used to strengthen the pupils’ awareness of their locality and of a range of cultures.

181. Planning is very good, carried out half-termly and supplemented by weekly plans. It is thorough, and detailed and identifies clearly the tasks to be taught and what pupils are expected to learn in lessons, including the historical vocabulary to be taught. Teachers’ clearly identify and use resources appropriately and systematically record what children have learnt. This contributes to effective teaching and learning.
182. Overall, resources are effectively used, for example, photographs and local people have a positive impact on the progress that pupils make. However, little evidence of the use of ICT was seen in extending pupils’ historical knowledge or skills. The enthusiasm and historical understanding of the co-ordinator contributes well to further the development of the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

183. By the ages of seven pupils attain standards in ICT that are broadly typical of those found nationally for seven year-olds. As pupils move through the school they make good progress in developing their knowledge and skills.
184. All pupils have opportunities to become familiar with computers and their uses through working in the school’s well-appointed computer network room. A computer is also located within each classroom. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have weekly timetabled sessions in the computer room.
185. From an early age pupils have the opportunity to become confident users of the keyboard, mouse and control devices. In Year 1, pupils were learning to program a video recorder and playback their recording. By Year 2 they have developed word-processing skills including the use of different fonts, sizes and colours for different purposes. The higher attainers can use the mouse to click and drag to highlight text and then underline the text and make it italic and bold. They were using this to present factual reports with titles and subtitles.
186. Pupils are building a range of skills and an understanding of the use of ICT in the home and the wider world. They are using CD-ROM to explore stories. They use *Black Cat Painter* to make pictures and to explore shapes and symmetry. Year 2 pupils using *Black Cat Writer* can use icons to make choices about fonts, use the *shift key* for capitals and question marks, and the *enter key* for new lines. Most pupils are confident although slow at using the keyboard. Higher attaining Year 2 pupils can print and save their work into a folder. The Year 1 and 2 class were using the Internet to access some numeracy games to practise memorising number facts in a way that was fun. Pupils

have a range of opportunities to develop skills in control technology, for example, programmable floor robots known as Roamers are used, as are remote control toys and the remote control for a television and video. Pupils are taught and know the correct vocabulary for *icon*, *shift key*, *space bar* for example. Apart from evidence in overall and half-termly plans, there was no pupils' work using bar charts or pictograms to show information.

187. ICT skills and understanding are being taught in a systematic way. These skills are being used well in English and satisfactorily in mathematics. They are not yet being effectively used in other areas of the curriculum, but the school has plans that show this is their intention.
188. Pupils' work is assessed regularly through observation of them working on the computers and through looking at their work. This is recorded in their individual profile for the subject and provides a clear picture of what they know, need to learn next and the progress they have made.
189. Overall, the quality of teaching observed in ICT was judged to be good. During the inspection four lessons were observed where ICT skills were being taught. In one of the lessons teaching was very good, in two lessons teaching was good and in the other it was satisfactory. Positive features of teaching included well-planned and well-organised activities; very good use of questioning; a good mix of teacher demonstration and pupils' practical activity; a good pace to teaching and learning; very well-managed pupil behaviour; and pupils working co-operatively together in pairs or threes. In a Year 1 and 2 class the teacher used questioning and demonstration to familiarise a group with a numeracy game. Once the pupils had played the game and practised their number skills, they introduced the game to a new pair. In doing so they were able to show their own understanding.
190. Less effective features of teaching included lack of teacher intervention to help pupils who were unsure. In another lesson when many pupils in the group were experiencing the same problem, the teacher helped them individually instead of using a group demonstration.
191. The recently appointed ICT co-ordinator has had a strong impact on the provision for the subject, and on raising standards for pupils. Since the last inspection a clearly defined curriculum showing progressive steps in each element has been implemented. This ensures that the subject now meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. All pupils have access to computers regularly at least once a week, through the provision of the new computer room. Staff training through national funding has resulted in more confident teaching and better subject knowledge. Pupils' attainment has improved, because their learning of skills is now systematic and is beginning to be used through other subjects, and they have developed real enthusiasm for their work.
192. The co-ordinator monitors planning, assessment profiles and pupils' work, and in the spring monitored teaching. The information gained has been used to form an action plan for the subject. As a result the New Opportunities Fund scheme is currently being used to meet the training needs of the teachers in the school. This is improving teachers' confidence and expertise in using ICT, particularly in relation to developing

pupils' literacy skills. The action plan shows clarity about how the school is to be connected to the Smethwick Learning Network, acknowledging both training needs and benefits to raising standards in literacy and numeracy.

MUSIC

193. In music, the limited evidence gathered indicates that pupils in the school attain the standards that are expected for their age by seven. Overall and half-termly planning show that provision is made for developing the full range of skills and experiences set out in the National Curriculum. The half-termly plans are detailed to provide support for the non-specialist teachers.
194. Only one lesson of music, taught by a supply teacher, was observed in Year 1 and the teaching was satisfactory. This is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the teaching of music in the school. In the lesson observed, pupils were given an opportunity to plan, create and perform music based on their visit to the local area. They listened to and used their voices, hands and feet to select and arrange a variety of sounds made by traffic, animals and people. The teacher helped pupils to organise their ideas and understand the difference between voice and other sounds. Most pupils listened attentively to others, took turns and responded appropriately, some with a good deal of confidence. Pupils showed satisfactory skills in listening and appraising although some found it difficult to distinguish between voice sounds from those made by hands or feet. In Years 1 and 2, pupils enjoy listening to taped and piano music in assembly. They sing with control, are able to hold a tune and keep a rhythm. Each class has one music lesson a week.
195. The co-ordinator monitors planning, assessments and collects tapes of class performances to monitor pupils' achievements. Class teachers make assessments against half-termly plans for each pupil. A local education authority advisory teacher for music provides advice and works with groups of pupils, reinforcing elements and skills identified in school planning. All pupils take part in a whole school performance during the year. This year a performance based on Christmas around the world celebrated and reflected the multi-cultural community of the school.
196. Resources for music are good, well organised and labelled.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

197. Pupils attain average standards in this subject by age seven. All pupils achieve satisfactorily, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. A particular feature of the lessons seen is the extent to which members of staff try to ensure that pupils with physical disabilities are included. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Year 2 everyone - the teacher, the special educational needs support assistant and the other pupils - co-operated to achieve the full involvement of a wheelchair bound pupil. Pupils develop satisfactory skills in the games and gymnastic activities seen during the inspection. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to learn to swim. The school's evidence indicates that they make sound progress in doing so.

198. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and as a result, pupils' attitudes are now consistently positive. The policy has been updated, and the school's programme of work, which guides teachers in their planning, has been revised to include elements of the national planning documents published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The good practice in assessing pupils' attainment and progress, which was noted then, has been maintained.
199. The standards attained by pupils are due to the consistently satisfactory teaching they receive. Teachers give clear instructions and explanations that lead pupils to join in the lessons confidently. This was true of a gymnastics lesson for pupils in Year 2, in which they created sequences of movement based on rolls and balances. The teachers' well-developed skills of managing and controlling pupils results in very good behaviour. Teachers provide a secure ethos in which pupils readily take responsibility for selecting apparatus and working successfully with others. Pupils are keen and show obvious signs of enjoyment. Most work independently, but a significant minority relies on others for ideas. This was evident in the limited variety of balances seen in the gymnastics lesson. In games activities, the clear learning intentions that teachers' plans identify enable pupils to make effective gains, for example, in devising their own games using small equipment such as balls and hoops. They negotiate the rules and show respect for each other's opinions.
200. The lessons observed were conducted safely and effectively, overall. However, most of the teaching lacked liveliness and drive. The lack of clear guidance from most teachers about what pupils could do to improve indicates that not all have enough knowledge of physical education. Also, not enough responsibility is given to pupils for evaluating their own and others' performances.
201. The involvement of the school in the 'Healthy Schools Award' scheme is having a good effect on the fitness of pupils, and the opportunities to take part in vigorous exercise during playtimes under the supervision of the lunchtime supervisors is an important part of this provision.
202. The hard work of the co-ordinator, especially in relation to developing physical education in the Foundation Stage, is having a positive impact on standards. However, the hall, which is used for gymnastics lessons, is too small especially for pupils in Year 2. This restricts the progress that is made in the lessons concerned.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

203. Pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus for religious education by age seven. The school has appropriate arrangements for teaching this subject, but it was only possible to observe one lesson. However, the scrutiny of teachers' plans and pupils' past work shows that the subject is taught regularly and effectively.
204. In the only lesson observed the good use of learning resources helped to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of Buddha's life as a baby. The pupils concentrated well, thanks to the quiet delivery by the teacher, which drew them in and engaged their attention. The pupils' learning, especially those for whom English is not their home

language, was further enhanced by the emphasis put on key vocabulary, and the writing of this on the whiteboard. The pupils took longer than expected to settle to their group tasks, but when they did they worked quietly. However, the teacher did not ensure that they worked with enough urgency, and this detracted from the progress made. However, overall, they made effective gains and began to understand the principles on which Buddhism is founded.

205. The examination of teachers' planning and pupils' past work suggests that teaching is at least satisfactory and that pupils cover a good range of work. They learn appropriately about Christianity. In Year 1, for example, they write about baptism. Pupils in Year 2 do more, including work about Christian festivals and the stories told by Jesus. The study of other faiths encompasses Sikh stories and religious practices and the principles of Hinduism. Occasionally, time is wasted when work is repeated in a slightly different form without any significant gains in learning.
206. Standards have been maintained from the time of the last inspection, when no significant weaknesses were identified. Since that time the provision made for the subject has improved significantly. The conscientious co-ordinator has rewritten the policy and revised the programme of work to reflect the new locally agreed syllabus and incorporate the national planning guidance. She uses her very good subject knowledge well to advise members of staff. This has a good impact on the progress that pupils make.
207. The work in religious education contributes well to the development of pupils' literacy skills. However, pupils do not use computers enough as part of their work. The teaching of this subject also contributes well to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Acts of collective worship add greatly to pupils' religious knowledge. For example, Year 2 act out the story of Rama and Sita as part of an assembly performed for the rest of the school and parents. The school has appropriate plans to increase the range of artefacts it uses to bring teaching to life.