

INSPECTION REPORT

SHIRLEY HEATH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Solihull, West Midlands

LEA area: Solihull

Unique reference number: 104050

Headteacher: Mrs G Knight

Reporting inspector: Mrs J P Hicks
2063

Dates of inspection: 12th – 13th June 2000

Inspection number: 194332

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Junior |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 7 - 11 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Coombe Road Shirley Solihull West Midlands |
| Postcode: | B90 3DS |
| Telephone number: | 0121 744 1339 |
| Fax number: | 0121 744 0604 |
| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs C Warburton |
| Date of previous inspection: | November 1996 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Mrs Judith Hicks | Registered inspector |
| Mr Kevern Oliver | Lay inspector |
| Mr Andrew Bond | Team inspector |

The inspection contractor was:

The University of Birmingham Schools Inspection Unit
School of Education
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 6 |
| Information about the school | |
| How good the school is | |
| What the school does well | |
| What could be improved | |
| How the school has improved since its last inspection | |
| Standards | |
| Pupils' attitudes and values | |
| Teaching and learning | |
| Other aspects of the school | |
| How well the school is led and managed | |
| Parents' and carers' views of the school | |
| | |
| PART B: COMMENTARY | |
| | |
| WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL | 10 |
| Standards in English, mathematics and science | |
| Pupils' attitudes and behaviour | |
| The quality of teaching | |
| School leadership | |
| The management of key subjects | |
| | |
| WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED | 16 |
| The quality of pupils' writing | |
| Marking | |
| Schemes of work in some subjects | |
| | |
| WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER? | 18 |
| | |
| PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS | 19 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Shirley Heath Junior School currently has 315 boys and girls aged from 7 to 11 on roll; this is larger than most junior schools. The school serves a pleasant neighbourhood in Solihull, and the number of pupils entitled to receive free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from the minority ethnic communities (about 6%) is higher than in most other schools. Eighteen pupils speak a language other than English at home, but only one of these is at an early stage in learning English. The pupils' attainment on entry is well above average in reading and mathematics, and above average in writing. An average number of pupils are included on the register of special educational needs (SEN), most of whom have minor learning difficulties which are resolved as they move through the school. However, four children have problems serious enough to require a statement of SEN and a further pupil is in the process of statutory assessment for a statement.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Shirley Heath Junior School is a good school that has made rapid progress in the past eighteen months. The staff work hard and teach well. Skilful leadership and purposeful management have enabled the school to sustain high standards and to give good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school maintains high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- The pupils enjoy school and their attitudes towards their work are very positive. High standards of behaviour and very good relationships with staff contribute to the progress they make.
- Standards of teaching are good.
- The headteacher provides the school with highly effective leadership and a clear sense of direction.
- The staff work as a close team, ensuring effective management of key subjects.

What could be improved

- The quality of pupils' writing does not match the high standards they achieve in reading.
- Marking is improving, but is not yet consistent enough.
- Despite the good progress made, up-to-date schemes of work are not yet in place for some subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Good progress has been made since then, but most of this has been recent. Significant improvements have now been made in the many areas identified as unsatisfactory in the last report. Clear and appropriate priorities have been established for school development over the next three years, with staff and governors contributing to a detailed school improvement plan. Development is under-pinned by a well-planned programme of professional development and training, and very good use has been made of advice and support offered by the Local Education Authority (LEA). A systematic approach to monitoring standards and teaching has been established. Statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship are now met, and provision for pupils' personal development is good. Appropriate systems for planning the teaching programme are in place and progress has been made on assessment. The school has sustained high standards in English, mathematics and science. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen this time. Accommodation has been upgraded and library provision has improved.

STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | Compared with | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | Similar schools |
| | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 1999 |
| English | A | B | B | B |
| mathematics | A | A | B | A |
| science | A | B | A | A |

| Key | |
|--------------------|---|
| well above average | A |
| above average | B |
| average | C |
| below average | D |
| well below average | E |

In recent years the school has consistently scored above or well above average in national tests at 11. The results last year were impressive in science, where almost all the pupils reached the expected level and 43% reached a higher level (level 5). Girls did particularly well, performing better than boys in all subjects, and overall results were well above those of similar schools. Over a four-year period results have improved steadily in line with national trends. Ambitious targets have been set for continuing improvement in test results. Those set by the LEA for 2002 have been set particularly high and will be difficult to achieve.

During the inspection, work seen in mathematics was well above average, with very high standards in some year-groups. There are also strengths in science, where the pupils demonstrate a very secure grasp of the topics they have covered and good understanding of scientific investigation. Many are fluent and articulate speakers, and standards of reading are high. However, the quality of writing, although better than average, does not reach the level it could. By Year 6 the pupils are confident in their use of computers to research and present information. Some work in religious education is of a very high standard.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. The pupils enjoy school, respect the staff and come prepared to learn. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Standards of behaviour are high. Pupils attend closely in lessons and can be trusted to work without close supervision. They play amicably together during breaks and at lunchtime. |
| Personal development and relationships | The pupils are open and friendly in their relationships with one another and with adults. |
| Attendance | A little above average. |

The pupils' responsible attitudes and behaviour are a strength of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Teaching of pupils: | Aged 7-11 years |
| Lessons seen overall | 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.

During the inspection 12% of the lessons were judged very good and 53% good; around two lessons in every three were good or better. All the lessons observed were, at least, thoroughly satisfactory, with no borderline or unsatisfactory teaching.

Where lessons are most successful, strengths include meticulous lesson planning, enthusiastic direct teaching, skilled questioning and effective use of aids such as overhead projectors and flip-charts. Staff have a thorough knowledge of how to teach basic skills such as spelling, and a clear understanding of national literacy and numeracy strategies. Both English and mathematics lessons are generally well taught, although mathematics is stronger overall. In all subjects, most teaching is sufficiently challenging for the abler pupils, whilst teachers modify tasks or give extra time to ensure that lower attainers are not left behind. Pupils with English as an additional language are given extra help if they need it. Good relationships and class management are strengths throughout the school. Minor shortcomings sometimes include overlong or mistimed lesson introductions. Marking is improving, but is not yet consistent enough.

Many teachers ensure that lessons include opportunities for discussion and collaboration in pairs or small groups, and this helps the pupils to think for themselves and to consolidate and apply what they have learned. Because teachers explain their intentions at the start of lessons, pupils have a clear perception of what they are learning and many can say how they might improve their performance. They work independently and are developing good research skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | All required subjects, including religious education, are appropriately provided for, together with personal and health education. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Provision is effectively organised. Individuals are sensitively helped by the co-ordinator for SEN. Special support assistants make a very positive contribution to the progress of statemented pupils and are an asset in the classes where they work. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Pupils are given the assistance they need to ensure that they make the same good progress as other pupils. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good. The school makes sound provision for pupils' spiritual development in assemblies and religious education lessons. Both moral and social development are good, with valuable opportunities for personal development through residential and other visits. Pupils have a growing awareness of different cultural traditions. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | There are good arrangements for looking after the pupils. The school is currently developing effective systems for encouraging good behaviour and positive efforts are being made to improve attendance. |

There were significant criticisms of the curriculum at the time of the last inspection, but the issues then raised have been or are being addressed. Provision for religious education and collective worship now meets statutory requirements. With a recent focus on key subjects, there is further to go in developing up-to-date schemes of work for some subjects, for example design and technology and physical education. Staff have prepared purposefully for the introduction of the revised National Curriculum in September 2000. The school makes good provision for extra-curricular activities, including an interesting programme of day and residential visits.

Staff have good rapport with the pupils and ensure that as far as possible they are happy and secure.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher has provided very effective leadership in difficult circumstances since her appointment, and much has been achieved in a short time. She has been very well supported by recently appointed and acting senior teachers, and by subject co-ordinators. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities capably. They well understand recent difficulties and the reasons for change, and have provided the headteacher with the backing and support needed. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | This is now good. Staff make intelligent use of assessment data and other evidence to identify areas where improvement is needed. A good start has been made on the evaluation of classroom practice. |
| The strategic use of resources | The school allocates its funding thoughtfully in order to raise standards and pursue priorities set out in the school improvement plan. |

Strengths of the management include a clear focus on improving teaching and the curriculum. There has been effective team-building and development of individual staff in positions of responsibility.

Staff and governors make every effort to ensure that they act on good information and obtain the best possible value when making financial and other decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are expected to work hard and do their best. • They like school and make good progress. • Standards of behaviour are good. • Staff are approachable in the event of problems or parental concerns. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quantity of homework is inconsistent. • There are too few extra-curricular activities. • Parents are not given enough information about their child's progress. |

Inspectors agree with all the positive observations made by parents. The range of extra-curricular activities and residential visits is better than that found in many similar schools. Pupils' annual reports are carefully written and contain all the required detail, and homework arrangements are satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The school maintains high standards in English, mathematics and science.

1 The school has sustained high standards, as measured by national tests in English, mathematics and science in the past four years. The general trend has been upwards, broadly in line with national improvements, but with some variation from year to year. In the most recent national assessments for which results are available (1999) the school's performance was above average in both English and mathematics, and well above average in science. The significant proportion of pupils who achieved a higher level (level 5) was a very positive feature, 37% in mathematics and a very high 43% in science. In comparison with similar schools, results were well above what would be expected in mathematics and science and better than average in English. One of the reasons for the school's success is that girls have achieved consistently well in recent years. There is a wider gap than usual between the performance of girls and boys in mathematics as well as English. This was a marked feature of the 1999 results and has been identified as an issue by the school, who are now seeking to improve boys' attainment, especially in writing. Inspection findings indicate that standards achieved by the present Year 6 pupils are similar to last year's, except that performance in mathematics has improved further.

2 In English overall standards are above average, but the writing of many pupils does not match their attainment in speaking, listening and reading. The pupils are articulate for their age-group and the older ones express themselves clearly and confidently, both in conversation and in more formal contexts. They are very well able to develop ideas and marshal arguments, as when older pupils independently prepare to debate an issue by logically separating 'pros' and 'cons'. Some lessons involve the class in listening very carefully, responding to and interpreting the views of others, as in a demanding religious education lesson when many of the pupils engaged readily with some complex generalisations. At a more practical level, they discuss one another's ideas about scientific investigations and formulate a sensible plan of action.

3 Because they read widely, most pupils have an extensive vocabulary, with only a few gaps. When faced with an unfamiliar word they are quick to ask others or to look it up, as when Year 6 pupils encountered the word 'solarium' in their work on persuasive writing. Usually pupils show a good understanding and feel for words, as when they compose their own advertising copy in Year 4. A secure command of technical vocabulary is seen in mathematics and science lessons.

4 The pupils read books that are challenging for their age-group with good understanding. Reading aloud is confident and expressive in Year 3, as when pupils read extracts from a novel by Dick King-Smith and, on a separate occasion, parts of their own stories. The pupils vie with one another for a chance to 'perform' and, even at this stage, they do their best to make their reading interesting and entertaining, showing good awareness of the listener. Technical skills are very secure, and the pupils attend carefully to features of the punctuation such as speech marks. By Year 6 most pupils read demanding texts fluently, with only momentary hesitation as they come across relatively unusual words such as 'cipher'. Most enjoy a good range of children's literature, including traditional as well as contemporary authors. When they re-tell narratives they deal well with character and motivation, and identify major themes with reference to the text. Older pupils use reference books confidently as well as electronic sources of information. They know their way around the library, but do not fully understand the Dewey decimal system of classification.

5 There are considerable strengths in mathematics. The pupils have quick recall of basic mathematical facts, and those in the upper sets are making good use of their knowledge of tables by Year 4. Mathematical reasoning is good. This is seen in quick mental arithmetic sessions when pupils

make prompt use of doubling and halving to arrive at a solution. Lower attaining pupils in Year 3 can, with a little adult support, round up or down near-multiples of 10 to help them to add up three numbers in their head. By Year 6 pupils in the middle set have a good understanding of negative numbers and can plot points representing positive or negative values on a grid. Throughout the school the pupils are good at explaining their thinking and working out the steps needed to solve problems. In a Year 4 numeracy session this helped the pupils to visualise reflections of simple shapes, first using straightforward mirror images and then a diagonal axis. By the end of Year 6, the most capable pupils are beginning to apply simple formulae and to represent these in graphic form, with an awareness of graphical representation in four quadrants. The most able pupils can visualise a shape given co-ordinates on a grid, and can predict the direction of a line from basic information. Most pupils set out their work in mathematics books neatly and clearly.

6 Very good standards have been maintained in science. The pupils have very secure recall of the work they have undertaken, and there is an improvement in their understanding of investigations. In an investigation on spinners, for example, older pupils showed a very good understanding of the need to control variables. They made sensible predictions based on scientific reasoning, while findings were recorded and presented systematically. As early as Year 4, pupils are developing a good understanding of how to interpret results and to present information in tabular or graphical form. Particularly good work was seen during the inspection in a Year 4 lesson which involved the collection, organisation and evaluation of data. This aspect of science has been an important focus recently and as a result standards of investigative and experimental science are rising.

7 Most parents are pleased with the standards achieved and believe that their children work hard and make good progress. Inspectors agree. Standards on entry to Year 3 are well above average in mathematics and reading. They are not as high in writing, although most pupils are competent in the technical skills of spelling and handwriting. From this starting point the pupils sustain good progress through the school, and eventually achieve high standards, both in their academic work and in extra-curricular activities.

8 The number of pupils included on the register of special educational needs (SEN) is broadly average, but only a few have serious learning difficulties. Many of these pupils have mild social or behavioural problems that affect their concentration. Almost all these pupils make progress that is similar to others, and a few do very well. Most are removed from the register of SEN as they progress up the school. This is often justified, but for a handful of pupils results in a gradual decline in achievement as the accustomed support is withdrawn.

9 There are relatively few pupils who speak a language other than English at home. These pupils do not need much extra support. They make generally good progress, especially in mathematics and science.

The pupils enjoy school and their attitudes towards their work are very positive. High standards of behaviour and very good relationships with staff contribute to the progress they make.

10 Almost all pupils enjoy school and their constructive attitudes help them to make progress. They know that they are expected to work hard, and settle down promptly to work as soon as the school day starts. During the inspection, there was absolute silence as Year 6 pupils copied out a poem for handwriting practice during the short morning registration period. Meanwhile in other year-groups the pupils got on with their personal reading quietly and with immediate concentration. The pupils can be trusted to work in a mature way without direct supervision during group activity time within literacy and numeracy sessions. They can also be trusted to use facilities outside the classroom, such as the library, without immediate supervision, and to take care of resources. Levels of independence are good. Even the least capable pupils in Year 3 participate fairly in a competitive game in mathematics, following instructions and the given rules without direct adult help. Older pupils are well able to organise themselves on the basis of an oral or written brief. They respond very positively to opportunities to work in pairs or small groups. For example, pupils in Year 6 made very good progress when they worked together to investigate spinners, with discussion of a high quality. Similarly in a literacy session, pairs of pupils worked enthusiastically together when they highlighted examples of bias in a short piece of text.

11 Throughout the school, the pupils usually behave very well. Outside during breaks they play or talk together amicably, with occasional minor disputes sorted out with little need for adult intervention. In lessons Year 3 pupils are sometimes inclined to call out and interrupt adults in their enthusiasm, but older pupils are invariably courteous and restrained. Most pay good attention in class, even when lesson introductions are lengthy. The pupils take pride in their work, and most books are presented well. Pupils set out their mathematics neatly, and science books include well-presented notes, flow charts and reports. The pace of work is generally at least satisfactory, although written offerings are sometimes relatively brief. Overall the pupils try hard and their efforts contribute to the good progress they make.

12 When stimulated by good teaching the pupils show plenty of imagination and are not afraid to share their ideas with others and to participate fully in activities. From Year 3 onwards they are keen to offer answers and take turns in reading aloud. In a Year 5 music lesson, individual pupils were quick to volunteer when asked to write a rhythmic phrase on the board to fit a given time signature. In one Year 6 lesson a pupil competently 'scribed' for the whole class, noting down ideas on a flip-chart as they arose. Pupils were confident and unselfconscious when helping with a short dramatic presentation in assembly. This is indicative of the very good relationships that prevail throughout the school. The pupils get on well with one another and are open and friendly in their relationships with staff.

Standards of teaching are good.

13 Teaching emerged as a strength during the inspection. Around two lessons in every three were judged good, with some very good teaching seen. The rest of the teaching was thoroughly satisfactory, with no borderline or unsatisfactory lessons seen. This represents a marked improvement since the last inspection, when 16% of lessons were judged unsatisfactory. This improvement is a notable achievement at a time when the school has been affected by the long-term absence of senior teachers. Newly-appointed, temporary and supply staff have worked very hard to get to know the school and the pupils, and to familiarise themselves with the teaching programme. Professional development, for example work on questioning techniques in mathematics, has contributed to the greatly improved standard of teaching.

14 Throughout the school teachers work closely together within year-groups to prepare their work, which is usually well designed to provide a good level of challenge for all groups of pupils. Expectations are generally high and usually appropriate, although occasionally teachers under-estimate the difficulty of texts chosen for work in literacy sessions. There is some meticulous lesson planning and preparation, and the use of teacher-made and other well-chosen resources is a positive feature. In particular there is thoughtful preparation of materials to enable pupils to visualise mathematical relationships. This was seen in a lesson on right-angles and the direction of turn in Year 3, and in work on place value and symmetry in Year 4. In one Year 6 lesson the pupils' thinking was developed very effectively to help them to visualise work on rotation and the transformation of shape. All staff make highly effective use of the overhead projectors available in each classroom, and of whiteboards and flip-charts. This adds to the pace of lessons, ensures that points are not lost and helps to engage the pupils' attention and interest. A good deal of learning takes place as a result of just such well planned and effective direct teaching inputs. Occasionally the introduction by the teacher is too long, however, and then pupils can start to lose concentration.

15 All staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of how to teach basic skills such as handwriting and spelling. On the basis of the lessons observed, the teaching of both literacy and numeracy are good, but the pupils' exercise books suggest that there are more consistent strengths in mathematics than in English taking the school as a whole. There is growing attention to investigations in mathematics and this is also an increasing strength in science. This was well illustrated in a Year 6 science lesson, when the pupils were encouraged to work out the implications of altering different variables as they undertook a series of related investigations. Here, as in other successful lessons, there was very effective use of small-group discussion to get the pupils to think for themselves. Numeracy skills were brought into play as the pupils completed tables, calculated averages and presented their results in the form of graphs; the session at the same time helped to consolidate their skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

16 In the most successful lessons teachers approach their work with confidence and enthusiasm. Teachers are well informed and all have a secure grasp of their subject matter. During the inspection very high levels of subject expertise were shown by co-ordinators where there was an opportunity to see them teach their own specialism. This results in high expectations, to which the pupils respond very positively. Some skilled questioning was seen during the inspection, especially where experienced teachers probe for a response beyond the pupil's initial answer. Good examples were seen in a Year 4 literacy session on advertising, where the teacher followed each question through to ensure that pupils were specific and accurate in the points they made. There was, as a result, effective incidental learning and improvement in the clarity of pupils' spoken English.

17 Good relationships and class management are strengths throughout the school. As a result teachers are able to plan many opportunities for pupils to work independently in small groups, to discuss their work and to consolidate and apply what they have learned. Good research skills are being developed, using both the library and electronic sources of information such as the Internet. A very good example of effective group work was seen in a religious education lesson, when, following an introductory activity, the pupils worked in threes to see if they could agree on two or three shared beliefs. Because of the positive ethos established by the teacher the pupils debated with one another freely and in real depth, eventually agreeing upon statements such as 'we believe that one person can make a big difference to the world' or 'we shouldn't judge others'. The session served the intended purpose very well, as a lead into work on the effects of belief in people's lives.

18 Staff are sensitive to the individual needs of the pupils, and there is good provision to make sure that all make the progress they should. The least mature of the Year 3 pupils are taught together for English and mathematics in a slightly smaller group than the rest. Teaching for these pupils is taken at an appropriate pace, with very lucid explanation by the teacher. Very effective support is provided in class by special support assistants. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are effectively encouraged and supported, and most make good progress especially in mathematics and science. There is, however, scope for more specific measures to make the pupils more aware of non-standard features in their written English.

The headteacher provides the school with highly effective leadership and a clear sense of direction.

19 The headteacher was appointed just under two years ago. Since that time, for reasons entirely beyond her control or that of the governors, there has been an usually high level of staff turnover. The school has been affected seriously by the long-term absence of senior staff, including the deputy headteacher. One of the strengths of the headteacher is that she has not been tempted to use these undoubted difficulties as a reason for avoiding necessary change. Instead she has used each set-back as an opportunity, providing the chance to make imaginative staff appointments, to develop the role of some talented and enthusiastic subject co-ordinators and to give increasing responsibility to promising teachers at a relatively early stage in their career. The high calibre of the temporary and supply staff recruited by the school is a positive feature. Team-building has been highly effective and staff morale is buoyant. This has all been accomplished with minimal disruption to the pupils' education. Some parents understandably express mild concern at staff changes, but this is fairly muted and most remain very happy with their choice of school.

20 The last inspection report identified shortcomings in a number of key areas, including leadership and management. Although the school was committed to high standards in the basic subjects, there were weaknesses in establishing priorities and identifying areas for development. The professional development of staff was inadequately managed and the school was failing to meet some key statutory requirements, including provision for collective worship. Evaluation and monitoring of work in the classroom had not been developed. At the time of the present headteacher's appointment there was limited evidence of real progress since the last inspection. Since then, marked progress has been made on almost every front, with the most significant weaknesses now addressed in full, and progress made in other areas.

21 The headteacher has, rightly in these circumstances, given first priority to improving teaching and learning and developing the curriculum to meet new requirements. This has involved a considerable change in management culture, including greater openness, with the introduction of classroom-based monitoring and analysis of pupils' work. The services of LEA inspectors and advisers have been very effectively enlisted as these changes have been implemented, and the school has received good professional support from this source. Subject co-ordinators and staff work closely together, and teams within year-groups plan together and share resources. Despite the extent of recent change, the school now has the basis of a tight-knit staff team.

22 Underpinning development is a detailed three-year school improvement plan that is highly relevant to the school's needs. Governors and staff have been fully involved in taking an overview of the school's present position and future direction, and as a result a series of whole-school objectives have been clearly identified. Inevitably, major priorities tend to be driven by external initiatives, as in most other schools, but the plan includes sections on lesser priorities, including a schedule of development for each subject of the curriculum drawn up by the relevant co-ordinator. Action plans are drawn up to a common format and almost all include quantifiable criteria for assessing progress and a clear timescale. Robust information about the school's strengths and areas requiring development is now being derived from the analysis of assessment data in the core subjects, and progress is being made on pupil tracking and individual target-setting. With improved monitoring, priorities for development are increasingly based on hard evidence. The headteacher and other staff are well aware of the school's strengths and remaining areas of relative weakness.

23 The school owes much of its present progress to the determination and leadership skills of the headteacher, but others, too, have played a part. Governors know the school well and are perceptive in their understanding of the present position. They have provided indispensable backing for the headteacher, enabling her to do what is needed. For example governors on the finance committee have understood why it has been right to tap into relatively costly assistance from the LEA's advisory and inspection services. The chair of governors in particular has provided invaluable advice and support, particularly necessary in the absence of established senior colleagues. Administrative staff, too, have worked very hard to keep the school running smoothly during a challenging period.

The staff work as a close team, ensuring effective management of key subjects.

24 The contribution of newly-appointed senior staff, those acting in senior roles and subject co-ordinators has been a key factor in school improvement. Most are at the moment carrying a heavy load of multiple responsibilities, which they manage very effectively by prioritising their work. The work of subject co-ordinators has been comprehensively reviewed in the light of national guidance and LEA advice, with new job descriptions now in place. The use of non-contact time, criticised in the last inspection report, has been rationally planned in line with whole-school priorities. Co-ordinators, including some very recently appointed, are now contributing very effectively to school improvement by providing expertise and advice in their subject areas, by checking on planning, classroom practice and the standard of pupils' work and by mapping out future developments. All are enthusiastic and committed in the work they do.

25 Introduction of the national numeracy strategy provides a good example of effective subject development based on a well-devised training programme. Building on the standard training model for headteacher, staff and governors, which was well organised, the school undertook additional work to develop teachers' questioning strategies. An essential element was analysing and feeding back the results of lesson observations to staff to help them to reflect and develop further their practice. Further training has focused on the teaching and learning of written methods in mathematics. Developmental work is currently being undertaken on marking and assessment, based on scrutiny of the pupils' exercise books. The greater use of formal assessments and testing is planned for the coming school year.

26 There has been significant development since the last inspection in a number of other subjects, too, including science, ICT and religious education. Development in English has been affected by the long-term absence of the literacy co-ordinator. The gap has been filled by the creation of a literacy working party chaired by the headteacher and including teacher representatives from each year-group. Since its establishment only a matter of weeks ago, this group has achieved a great deal including reorganisation of the fiction library and clarification of reading records. With helpful inputs from the LEA's English inspector, the working party is now in the process of reviewing

medium-term planning to incorporate more effectively areas such as speaking and listening and a range of cross-curricular links.

27 One of the school's strengths is the evolving model for developing subjects of the curriculum. This includes a review phase, which takes advantage of external expertise as well as using internal sources of evidence about strengths and weaknesses, followed by focused training, implementation of new policies or methodologies and further review. If sustained this will be a powerful means of developing standards progressively in each subject.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The quality of pupils' writing does not match the high standards they achieve in reading.

28 Standards of writing are slightly above average in each age-group but do not match the high standards achieved in reading and, indeed, in mathematics and science. As the school has identified, boys tend to have more problems with writing than girls. This is part of a general pattern already evident when pupils start school in Year 3. Most technical features are secure, with generally good standards of handwriting and spelling. In a Year 6 handwriting session, for example, almost all the pupils wrote in a fluent, legible joined script; about a third were beginning to develop a personal style. With individual exceptions, pupils present their work well, and some are adept at producing aids to thinking such as bulleted lists and flow diagrams. This is seen in work across the curriculum, for example in science books, as well as in literacy. Writing is in general quite adequate to support pupils' learning in various subjects.

29 Literacy sessions and additional English lessons provide the pupils with a broad range of writing experiences. By Year 6 they are well able to produce a formal letter and learn to structure an argument, even using formal terminology such as 'however', 'thus' and even 'furthermore'. Poetry writing is limited in Year 6, but the main area of weakness is extended writing, especially narrative, where some of the pupils tend to lack fluency and to run short of imaginative ideas. There are some notable exceptions: for example, Year 6 pupils produced sensitive accounts of a Jewish family's escape from Germany into Switzerland at the time of World War 2. These carried conviction as 'diary' entries and showed insight into the thoughts and feelings of the leading characters. Most of the best work was produced by girls, however. Some above average pupils in Year 6 develop a good feel for parody, as in a re-writing of the story of Goldilocks as a cliff-hanger: 'Will the bears return in time to save their property and their precious belongings?' On the other hand, some short stories recently produced by Year 6 pupils are poorly structured and have little imaginative credibility.

30 There are some associated problems. Because they are not writing as fluently and freely as they might, younger pupils have difficulty in sustaining a consistent story-telling 'voice'. In a Year 3 additional English session, for example, the pupils created a story frame before they started writing, but this then interfered with their control of the past tense, so that some tended to waver between past and present. This difficulty was exacerbated where pupils had English as an additional language. Another significant technical problem for this age-group is sentence demarcation, which is not securely established at this stage. In Year 6 a number of otherwise competent writers are not paragraphing their work effectively, and in some cases do not attempt to use paragraphs at all. This is at least in part a function of the limited length of their writing and an insecure feel for prose structure.

31 The school has already identified writing as an area for future development, and a strategy is being formulated in the literacy development plan. Staff have in particular begun to consider teaching approaches for improving boys' performance in writing. Alongside this, it is worth considering the writing models available to the pupils. Especially in Year 6, the pupils' opportunities to engage with good literature, except at a factual level, or to write a piece inspired by another author are relatively

limited. As a result, they sometimes tend to draw on less appropriate and stimulating models, such as popular television programmes, for their ideas.

Marking is improving, but is not yet consistent enough.

32 Marking presents a mixed picture. Some staff read the pupils' work very thoroughly and mark thoughtfully, so that at best there are examples of careful critical response with constructive points for improvement. In a piece of persuasive writing, for example, one teacher picked up an inconsistency in a child's argument that was by no means obvious at first glance. Another teacher noticed and addressed a misconception implicit in a science report. Other examples, however, show marking that consists mainly of general approbation, giving pupils little indication over a period of time of how they might make progress. Although staff have started to address this issue, relatively little marking is yet specifically related to class or individual targets. Sometimes marking is still confined to technical details of spelling and punctuation, whilst grammatical errors and structural issues such as paragraphing are not tackled consistently. There is some self-correction by pupils in mathematics. Whilst this is not necessarily inappropriate, pupil marking is used more extensively in some classes than others and needs rationalisation. In Year 6, unmarked work can be found in both mathematics and English exercise books, but this mainly dates from early in the school year. There has been a general improvement in the quality of marking recently.

33 The headteacher and subject co-ordinators are aware of the need to develop and implement a consistent marking policy. A good start has been made with an analysis of existing practice undertaken by the headteacher, followed by discussion of the results at a staff meeting. The issue now needs to be taken further, especially to help raise standards of writing.

Despite the good progress made, up-to-date schemes of work are not yet in place for some subjects.

34 This is a school that has come a long way in less than two years. Priorities for development have necessarily been dominated by implementation of national literacy and numeracy strategies, and response to local and national initiatives in ICT. The other core subjects, science and religious education, have also remained high on the school's agenda. Arrangements for maintaining the provision of other subjects as the introduction of Curriculum 2000 approaches have been satisfactory, but have tended to involve short-term solutions. In physical education, for example, teachers plan largely on the basis of a number of commercial schemes taken in conjunction with new national guidance in the subject. In geography and design and technology, current documentation is 'thin' and does not provide a sufficiently secure basis for teachers' medium-term planning. Co-ordinators and other staff are very well of aware this.

35 Effective plans are already in hand to ensure that subjects are reviewed systematically and that pupils embark on the new National Curriculum Programmes of Study from September 2000 onwards. The school improvement plan shows how each subject is to be reviewed, with schemes of work progressively developed and set in place. If the planned timetable for improvement is adhered to, the school will soon have a well-planned provision to support high standards in each area of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36 The findings of the inspection team come as no surprise to the school. In the light of the problems recently tackled, the shortcomings identified in the course of this inspection are straightforward, although the issue about writing will demand long-term efforts. In order to raise standards and improve provision still further, then, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

Take steps to improve the quality of the pupils' writing by

- developing strategies for improving the fluency of boys' writing;
- considering how a greater focus on the study of literature might raise standards;
- seeking opportunities for extended writing in each subject of the curriculum.
(see paragraphs 28 - 31)

Establish and implement a whole-school policy for marking in order to give pupils high quality feedback and show how their work can be improved.

(see paragraphs 32 - 33)

Implement current plans for completing schemes of work for all subjects.

(see paragraphs 34 - 35)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 17 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 14 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 2 | 10 | 5 | 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 | Y3 – Y6 |
|--|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | n/a | 315 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | n/a | 26 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | Nursery | Y3 – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | n/a | 4 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | n/a | 61 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 18 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 26 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 9 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|------|
| School data | 94.8 |
| National comparative data | 94.1 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.0 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 1999 | 40 | 25 | 65 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 30 | 30 | 38 |
| | Girls | 24 | 21 | 25 |
| | Total | 54 | 51 | 63 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 83 (78) | 78 (79) | 97 (83) |
| | National | 70 (65) | 69 (58) | 78 (69) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 31 | 26 | 36 |
| | Girls | 24 | 21 | 21 |
| | Total | 55 | 47 | 57 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 85 (66) | 72 (80) | 88 (69) |
| | National | 68 (63) | 69 (64) | 75 (69) |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 1 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 2 |
| Indian | 11 |
| Pakistani | 7 |
| Bangladeshi | 1 |
| Chinese | 1 |
| White | 290 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 2 |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

| | |
|--|--------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 13 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 24 : 1 |
| Average class size | 31.5 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

| | |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 2 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 44 |

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

| | |
|--|---------|
| Financial year | 1998/99 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 475,028 |
| Total expenditure | 466,893 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1,546 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 2,548 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 10,683 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 315 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 107 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 36 | 53 | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 38 | 53 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 38 | 51 | 5 | 1 | 5 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 15 | 53 | 23 | 7 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 38 | 48 | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 31 | 51 | 14 | 2 | 2 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 62 | 29 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 57 | 39 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 30 | 52 | 11 | 3 | 4 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 45 | 37 | 6 | 2 | 11 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 37 | 50 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 34 | 37 | 15 | 2 | 13 |