

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BROMLEY HILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Kingswinford, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103819

Headteacher: Miss Tracy Ruddle

Reporting inspector: Mrs Judith Hicks  
2063

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June 2001

Inspection number: 195993  
Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Granville Drive Kingswinford West Midlands
Postcode:	DY6 8LW
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Ron Wicken
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

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2063	Judith Hicks	Registered inspector	Science Art and design	The school's results and achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management
19335	Kevern Oliver	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well pupils are cared for Partnership with parents
21245	William Lowe	Team inspector	Design and technology Geography Physical education	
19765	Pauleen Shannon	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Music Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
10978	Mike Sullivan	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology (ICT)	The curricular opportunities offered to pupils
10204	Elizabeth Walker	Team inspector	English History Special educational needs Equal opportunities	
28882	Barbara Jones		The work of the unit for visually impaired pupils	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Bromley Hills Primary School is a large suburban primary school in Kingswinford, south of Dudley, with 329 boys and girls currently on roll. It includes a unit for pupils with visual impairment (the VI Unit) who are fully integrated for most of the time. Many pupils are drawn from the immediate neighbourhood of the school, a pleasant area of mainly owner-occupied housing, whilst about a quarter come from less advantaged areas nearby. About 13% of the pupils are entitled to receive free school meals, broadly in line with the national average. The pupils are almost all white and of UK origin, with none speaking English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is broadly average. There are an average number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in the main school. When the VI Unit is included, above average numbers have significant problems requiring a statement of SEN. Bromley Hills has been accorded priority status for development by the local education authority (LEA) because of concerns about standards.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a rapidly improving school that is now providing an appropriate standard of education for its pupils. Leadership by the headteacher is very good, and governors and staff share her vision and aspirations for the school. As a result standards, although still too low, are rising. Teaching has not been good enough in the immediate past, but is now satisfactory, with strengths in some classes and year-groups. The school provides sound value for money.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

#### **What the school does well**

- Strong, purposeful leadership is provided by the current headteacher.
- Great strides are being made in school improvement in many areas.
- Initiatives to develop the quality of teaching and learning are proving very successful.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to their work and their relationships with one another are very good.
- The VI Unit is highly effective, with some excellent features.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards remain lower than they should be in art, history, and information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school, and in science and religious education by the end of the junior stage.
- Despite marked improvement recently, there is still some under-achievement in English and mathematics.
- Teaching still has shortcomings in some classes.
- Some senior teachers are not fulfilling their management responsibilities effectively and the leadership of some subjects is not strong enough.
- Attendance is below average and registration procedures need to be tightened up.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in March 1997, when criticisms were made of school management, teaching, attendance and standards, especially for the older pupils. The then acting headteacher and governors started to tackle some of these problems in difficult circumstances almost two years ago. Since the appointment of the present headteacher in September 2000, remarkable progress has been made on many fronts. Efforts to improve teaching and learning are producing clear results, with many more successful lessons seen than in 1997. Standards are rising as a result, especially in English and mathematics. Management roles are now well defined. Some teachers are taking hold of their delegated responsibilities effectively, but others still have a long way to go. Attendance is now monitored effectively, but is still below average. By dint of sheer hard work on the part of staff and parents the learning environment has been considerably improved despite limited funds. The present year has been a turning point for the school, and recent improvement has been very significant.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	D	E	E	E
Mathematics	D	E	E	E
Science	C	E	D	D

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

Standards have been too low for some years. In last year's national tests for eleven-year-olds (summer 2000) Bromley Hills pupils performed well below the national average in English and mathematics, and below average in science. These results were poor in comparison with similar schools<sup>1</sup>. Far too few pupils reached the level expected for the age-group, and not enough reached a higher level, with boys doing particularly badly in English. Tests for seven-year olds presented a similar picture. Standards in reading and mathematics were well below the national average and writing was below average. Mathematics results at seven were in the bottom 5% of similar schools. Trends show that the rise in the school's test results has kept pace with other schools, but this is from too low a starting point. Recently set targets are not ambitious enough, especially in mathematics.

The inspection has revealed a much better situation now. Standards have risen in English and mathematics to a point where they are close to the national average at seven and eleven. Most pupils are now making satisfactory progress, although there are still pockets of under-achievement. In mathematics the most capable pupils are still not being stretched enough. Those with special educational needs are supported adequately and make satisfactory progress, whilst children in the VI Unit make progress that is at least good. Standards in art, history and ICT throughout the school, and in science and religious education for the older pupils, remain below average. In design and technology, geography, music and physical education, the pupils' work is now at an appropriate level for the age-group and achievement is satisfactory.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic about their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in lessons, around the school and in the playground. The pupils are attentive and responsive in assemblies.

<sup>1</sup> Similar schools are those where between 8% and 20% of the pupils are entitled to receive free school meals.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils are friendly, responsible and sensitive to the needs of others, including the visually impaired pupils.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Absence rates are higher than they should be.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 4 – 5 years	aged 5 – 7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

*Judgements about teaching are made in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection 96% of the teaching seen was sound or better and just over half the lessons were good or better, with 18% very good or excellent. Teaching was only unsatisfactory in three of the 78 lessons observed (4%). The pupils' exercise books and files from the start of the school year present a less positive picture, however, and show that some teaching in the recent past has been dull and undemanding, especially for the most capable pupils. Inadequate standards of presentation and unfinished work have been accepted without challenge by some staff, and marking is of very mixed quality. Not enough has been expected of the pupils, and this has slowed the rate of their learning, contributing to low standards.

The best lessons currently are well planned, imaginative and delivered with enthusiasm, to which the pupils respond with lively interest. Teachers have a good grasp of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and the teaching of both English and mathematics is now generally good. Mental arithmetic is particularly well taught. Basic reading skills, including letter sounds, are taught securely but there is not enough attention to joined handwriting and the presentation of written work. Pupils with visual impairment are very well supported and included in all activities. Others with special educational needs receive mainly satisfactory support with their literacy development. There is now an awareness of the need to challenge the most able pupils, but expectations are still not high enough in every class, especially in subjects such as science, history and religious education.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Generally satisfactory, but the balance is not right. Too much time is given to English to the detriment of other subjects. There is good use of educational visits and community involvement.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	Satisfactory, but not managed as effectively as it might be. Pupils individual education plans lack a sharp enough focus and are not taken into sufficient account when class teachers plan their lessons. Provision in the VI Unit is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Spiritual and moral development are promoted well through assemblies and collective worship, and the school is making effective provision for the pupils' social development by encouraging them to take on responsibilities. Cultural development is unsatisfactory because not enough is done to reflect a wide range of traditions.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a secure, happy environment for the pupils. Formal procedures need to be tightened up and policies updated.



How well the school works in partnership with parents	Sound. Newsletters are well-written and informative, but pupils' reports last year lacked a sharp focus. Attendance at consultation meetings is not as high as would be expected. Volunteer helpers are making a good contribution to learning in some classes.
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### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher has provided highly effective, energetic and well-focused leadership since her appointment at the start of the present school year. The deputy head complements her strengths. Some other teachers have good organisational skills, but others are not making a contribution commensurate with their seniority.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are well informed and determined that the school should continue to improve. They are supporting change effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Analysis of test results and improved assessment in English and mathematics are helping to pinpoint areas for improvement. Recent monitoring and development of teaching and learning are strengths.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school has identified its targets for development very effectively, and is using all the resources at its disposal in pursuit of these ends. Governors and staff are aware of the need to make careful comparisons in order to achieve 'best value' in their spending.
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school is adequately staffed and there are sufficient learning resources. The new computer suite is a very good resource. The accommodation has been much improved by recent redecoration and refurbishment, but the fabric remains in a poor state.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recent improvements, and the leadership provided by the new headteacher.</li> <li>Expectations that children will work hard and do their best.</li> <li>Efforts to help the children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>The standard of most teaching.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quantity and consistency of homework.</li> <li>The provision of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>Information about their child's progress.</li> <li>Low aspirations on the part of some teachers.</li> </ul>

Inspectors entirely agree with parents that recent changes have been very much for the better and that the leadership provided by the headteacher is a strength. All the other statements are also broadly in line with inspection findings, apart from the criticism of extra-curricular activities. Inspectors regard this provision as good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1 On the basis of national test results at seven and eleven, standards at Bromley Hills Primary School are seen to have been far below what would be expected for the past five years or more. Most of the children have reached an average level for their age-group when they start school, scoring well in important areas such as speaking and listening when they are assessed on entry to the reception class. With this intake there can be no explanation for the school's poor performance in national tests over the years other than inadequate teaching. Governors were not fully aware of the position, and it is only recently that concerted efforts have been made to raise standards by all concerned. This thrust is beginning to have an effect, with improvement in the Year 6 science results in summer 2000 and a marked improvement in English and mathematics likely in the current year, 2001.

2 The pattern of improvement in the school's national test results between 1996 and 2000 is similar to that of other schools nationally, but this is measured from a starting point that is far lower than it should have been. Targets for performance in next year's national curriculum tests (summer 2002) have been set at an unambitious level, with expectations that are much too low in mathematics. Governors should set more challenging targets for the future.

3 In the most recent tests for which results are available (summer 2000) Year 6 pupils scored well below both the national average and the average for similar schools in both English and mathematics. Test results were below average in science. Too few pupils reached the expected level (Level 4) in English, and only 16 per cent reached a higher level compared with 29 per cent nationally. Boys did particularly badly in English last year, although over a longer period the gap in attainment between boys and girls has been no greater than that found nationally. In mathematics only 53 per cent of the pupils reached Level 4, compared with the national average of 71 per cent, and relatively few pupils reached the higher Level 5. Last summer's tests for seven-year-olds presented a similarly disappointing picture, with standards in reading and mathematics well below the national average and writing below average. Mathematics results at seven were in the bottom 5 per cent of similar schools. Teachers' assessments indicate that standards were also well below average in science at the age of seven.

4 The inspection has revealed a much better situation now. Standards have risen in English and mathematics to a point where they are close to the national average at seven and eleven. Most pupils are now making satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and most other subjects, although there are still pockets of under-achievement, mainly a legacy of past shortcomings. The high fliers in particular could achieve still more. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups, and those that there are do at least as well as the rest. Lower attainers supported through various initiatives and booster groups are benefiting from these measures. Most pupils with special educational needs are adequately supported and make satisfactory progress. Those attached to the VI Unit work at a similar level to other pupils, making good, and sometimes very good, progress.

5 From an average starting point when they enter reception, the children are now making satisfactory progress in reception, and most are well on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals<sup>2</sup> by the time they start Year 1. A significant minority achieve more than this and are working within the early stages of the National Curriculum already. Achievement is satisfactory in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, physical development and creative development. Attainment is

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<sup>2</sup> National targets that most children should achieve by the end of the reception year.

above average and achievement is good in personal, social and emotional development and in the children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

6 Standards of speaking and listening are average. The pupils generally speak fluently, join in discussions and follow an argument at an appropriate level for their age-group. Most have a good general vocabulary, but their use of technical vocabulary is not always well developed in individual subjects, for example in science. Very high priority has been given to raising standards of literacy this year, especially to lift achievement in Year 6. Areas of perceived weakness, such as the writing of older boys, are being addressed effectively. These efforts have met with considerable success, with standards now close to the national average, but attainment is still patchy in some classes and year-groups. In Year 1 some of the pupils have not made a rapid enough start in reading, whilst other groups read accurately and expressively. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils do not all read with good understanding, but technical skills such as knowledge of spelling patterns are secure and have been taught appropriately. There remains some under-achievement in English on the part of some higher attainers at various points in the school. The pupils are taught to develop research skills, including the use of indexes and glossaries, but this teaching mainly takes the form of isolated exercises rather than being developed in many different subjects. Writing development is sound, with attainment at seven and eleven average for the age-group. By the upper junior stage, most pupils are writing fluently, accurately and at some length, and are starting to use paragraphing. However, they seldom use computers to draft and re-draft their work. Handwriting and the standard of presentation are relative weaknesses throughout the school.

7 The school is working hard to raise standards in mathematics, and attainment is now broadly average at the end of both key stages. Most older pupils have a satisfactory grasp of place value, which they apply in calculations with whole numbers, and know their multiplication tables. By Year 6 they have grasped the idea of equivalent fractions and are making the necessary links between ideas of proportion, ratio, percentages, decimals and fractions. The pupils' facility with mental calculation, which was criticised at the time of the last inspection, has greatly improved throughout the school. This has not been at the expense of practical work, which is giving the younger pupils a good basis for their understanding of fractions and measurement.

8 Standards in science are now average at the age of seven, but remain below average at eleven because of weaknesses in the pupils' investigative skills. The older pupils have good factual knowledge of some topics, but find it difficult to express themselves clearly using the correct scientific terminology. In information and communication technology (ICT) standards are lower than they should be at both key stages, largely because the pupils have not had access to the full range of experience they need until very recently. Computers are very little used to support learning in a range of subjects and for research purposes. Attainment is also below average in art and history throughout the school. Standards in religious education are as expected at the age of seven, but below average by eleven because the pupils have not had the opportunity to learn about faiths other than Christianity in sufficient depth.

9 In design and technology, geography, music and physical education the pupils' work is at an appropriate level for the age-group and achievement in these subjects is satisfactory.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10 The overwhelming majority of Bromley Hills pupils are enthusiastic about their school. They see it as a familiar yet special place in which they are able to learn and play. They get on well with

each other, with their teachers and with all the other adults who work with them. They are predominantly cheerful and polite, and have very open attitudes to everyone they meet. They respect authority and particularly like and admire their new headteacher.

11 Pupils' attitudes to their work, which were commended by the previous inspection team, remain good. In most lessons they work hard, both on their own and in groups. In a Year 4 science lesson on muscles, movement and energy, for example, pupils prepared for their experiments and shared ideas and results enthusiastically. In a Key Stage 1 assembly about co-operation pupils were totally absorbed throughout and had a very clear understanding of what was involved.

12 Pupils enjoy responsibility. They fetch and deliver attendance registers efficiently, help keep the school tidy, look after the special sensory garden and set up equipment for lessons and assemblies. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 run two tuck shops and help look after the school office during lunchtimes competently. They happily assist visitors and fetch and carry books and other materials around the school.

13 The overall standard of behaviour in class and around the rest of school is good, with playground behaviour a normal mixture of quiet and exuberant games, gatherings and conversation. Pupils are aware of each other's needs and look after one another. They ensure that visually impaired pupils are naturally included in playground games and all other aspects of school life.

14 No bullying and very little bad behaviour was seen during the inspection. Pupils support the school's code of conduct. They are well aware of what is expected of them and agree with the new system of rewards and sanctions. They believe that the system is fair and capable of sorting out problems as and when they arise. Since the start of the school year there have been only three exclusions, all of them temporary.

15 Punctuality is satisfactory, with lessons starting on time and staff and pupils quickly getting down to work. Attendance levels, however, are below the national average and are not as good as they should be.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

16 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, as at the time of the last inspection. However, there are some sharp contrasts and many indications of recent change. During this inspection just over half the lessons seen were taught well or better, with a creditable number of very good and excellent lessons observed (18 per cent). With only 4 per cent of the teaching judged unsatisfactory, this is a very different picture from the last inspection, when almost one lesson in five was unsatisfactory and there was little good teaching. This time good teaching was seen in some classes throughout the school and at each key stage. Very good and excellent teaching was also observed in different classes in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and in the work of the VI Unit. There was some good teaching in the reception class, but other provision at the Foundation Stage that was far less satisfactory. Variation in teaching quality is not on the whole associated with particular subjects or age-groups, but is largely the result of different levels of professional skill on the part of individual teachers. There is, however, some general insecurity over the teaching of ICT. This is largely because the appropriate resources have only just been put in place with the installation of the computer suite, and many teachers are not familiar with the new hardware and software.

17 A far less positive picture emerges from the scrutiny of pupils' work. Looking back to the start of the school year, exercise books show that teaching in some classes and year-groups has been consistently mediocre or unsatisfactory in the recent past. Not enough has been expected of the pupils, and there has been little to interest or challenge the high fliers. The pupils have not been encouraged to take enough pride in the presentation of their work, with unfinished pieces and empty

pages throughout some books. Files are untidily presented, and some contain undemanding worksheets and other low-level material, such as wordsearch exercises. Science folders for some Year 4 pupils include worksheets on forces designed for six and seven-year-olds. Marking is widely varied in quality, with some careful and constructive marking of pupils' work, for example in Year 6 English books. In other cases, marking consists of little more than ticks, whilst some mathematics books contained many uncorrected pages. In science inaccurate statements have sometimes gone without challenge.

18 To some extent weaker teaching was masked during the inspection by support strategies quite appropriately put in place by the school. Where teaching was likely to be less strong, team teaching and support staff were in place to ensure that learning was at least satisfactory and steady progress was being made by the pupils. This was the position in the reception class. In other year-groups scheduled lessons were sometimes taken over by highly skilled teachers such as the headteacher, a teacher seconded to the school to develop professional skills and an advisory teacher from the LEA. This is serving the purposes of professional development well.

19 Some of the least successful lessons, including two where the teaching was unsatisfactory, were delivered by members of staff holding promoted posts. Where the teaching is borderline or unsatisfactory, lessons are not well enough planned to take the pupils forward at a good pace and there is under-expectation of what can be achieved. A lesson on litter, for example, largely repeated material already covered on a previous occasion, and there was little new learning. In an unsatisfactory mathematics lesson, the delivery was tedious and the pace slow and laboured, so that the pupils lost interest. In a physical development session with the youngest children, time was wasted and the children were heavily over-directed, with no opportunity to extend the scope of their activities or think for themselves. Such examples were not typical during inspection week, but written work suggests that these and similar shortcomings have been prevalent in the past.

20 The best teaching is lively and imaginative, with very good pace. Exciting, stimulating and creative teaching was observed in Year 6 work on *Macbeth* and in work on the Caribbean in Year 3, for example. One very good mathematics lesson in Key Stage 2 introduced pupils in a lower set to the idea of proportion. The topic was introduced carefully in well thought out, logical steps, using practical materials to help all the pupils to visualise the concept. The teacher insisted on complete attention and concentration, thus helping the lower attainers to make good progress. The support for pupils with visual impairment was very good, enabling them to follow the line of reasoning well. The lesson was characterised by very good attention to the use of mathematical language, with pupils required to answer questions in full statements. Similarly effective attention to the development of subject-specific language was seen in a highly successful science lesson where the pupils were encouraged to articulate their ideas about light and shadows very precisely. On the whole, though, insufficient attention is given to the development of specialist language within each subject.

21 Excellent one-to-one teaching was observed when a child in the reception class was introduced to Braille. The teaching was patient, kind and encouraging, carefully guiding the child through the necessary small steps. The response was total commitment and concentration, with very good learning. Throughout the school the inclusion of pupils with visual impairment in all lessons, including ICT, is a significant strength.

22 Teachers have a good grasp of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and the teaching of both English and mathematics is now generally good, with secure teaching of basic skills. The pupils learn their letter sounds and basic reading strategies at the appropriate stage, although there are indications that these skills are better taught in some classes than others. From Year 2 the pupils are taught to use reference books and use books to find information effectively, despite the lack of a central library. However, opportunities are missed for developing literacy skills throughout the curriculum, with few opportunities for independent research. Handwriting is not as effectively

taught as other skills, and there is not enough attention to the presentation of the pupils' work. In mathematics sessions, the teaching of mental arithmetic is a growing strength that is having a positive influence on standards. The school has identified that more attention needs to be given to the plenary sessions at the end of the numeracy hour, and staff are already working on this. Some very effective teaching of ICT skills was seen during the inspection, but this has not been typical of the recent past when provision has been limited by a lack of equipment and expertise.

23 There have been marked improvements since the last inspection, particularly in lesson planning. The school has worked hard to ensure that the purposes of each lesson are well defined and communicated to the pupils, and this is now done well by many teachers. This is helping the pupils to understand what is expected of them and to gain a greater awareness of their own progress. One or two teachers still make objectives over-general, however, and this sometimes contributes to a lack of focus in lessons. Staff usually have a good grasp of the material they are teaching, but the pupils' written work indicates some weaknesses, for example in aspects of science and in religious education. Where pupils' interest is engaged they are prepared to work hard and put some effort into the planned activities: they concentrate well in oral mathematics sessions, for example. Behaviour management is generally positive and effective, and classroom relationships are good.

24 Homework is set throughout the school, but is not always used to the best effect, for example to help pupils prepare for the next lesson. Parental concerns about the inconsistency of homework and its marking do have some justification.

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

25 The overall range of learning opportunities provided by the school is broadly satisfactory and the appropriate statutory curriculum is in place, as at the time of the last inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have full access to the curriculum. A particular strength is the integration and support provided for pupils with visual impairment.

26 A number of changes have recently taken place in the curriculum for the Foundation Stage to bring this into line with changing national requirements. This is almost complete, but planning is not yet based appropriately on the steps and stages set out in national policy documentation. Provision for physical development, especially outdoor play, remains unsatisfactory.

27 The breadth and balance of the curriculum at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are not satisfactory. A disproportionate amount of teaching time is given to English, and this is having an impact on some other subjects. For example the time allocated to teaching science is less than is needed in some classes. This has an effect on standards by limiting the time available for practical and investigative work. Insufficient attention is given to vocabulary development and literacy skills across the curriculum, whilst in a number of subjects the pupils do not have enough opportunity to research information and present it in their own words. ICT skills are below average, particularly in Key Stage 2, with resources as yet under-used, and there are too few attempts to use ICT as a tool for learning in many subjects. Overall teaching time is at present less than that recommended nationally at Key Stage 2, but plans are well under way to rectify this from the beginning of the new school year.

28 The provision for pupils' personal, social health education is satisfactory. Aspects of health education are appropriately covered in the science curriculum and the involvement of the 'Glug' road show provides older pupils with good teaching about the harmful effects of drugs. Pupils in Year 6 have an appropriate programme of sex education.

29 The school has effective strategies in place for teaching literacy and numeracy. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been successful in promoting lively lessons, which drive up the pupils' skills in mental mathematics. Teachers plan their literacy hours effectively to promote the learning of basic skills and to support the wider English curriculum.

30 The school has a strong commitment to raising standards, not only in national tests of English and mathematics, but also in a broad range of other subjects, particularly ICT. A number of initiatives are in place to boost standards including targeted additional literacy support for younger juniors, 'Springboard' mathematics in Year 5 and booster classes for some Year 6 pupils in mathematics and English. These initiatives are intrinsically worthwhile and are helping to raise standards, but there are problems with the organisation of this support (see paragraph 35).

31 The previous inspection report noted shortcomings in the policy documentation and schemes of work for many subjects. This situation has not improved. Many of the policies are outdated and neither reflect current National Curriculum requirements nor describe present school practice. History is a particular case in point. The work in a number of subjects is now based on recently produced national schemes. This is appropriate in providing a secure framework for further development. There are, however, important issues as yet not tackled about how mixed age-groups are to be planned for. As matters stand, there are gaps in the topics that some groups of pupils have covered in several subjects that will need to be addressed next year.

32 A range of useful educational visits is organised each year to enhance learning and broaden the curriculum. In the past year these have included visits to the Black Country Museum, Cosford Aerospace Museum and Telford Park. Year 6 pupils have also taken part in a residential visit to a specialist centre, where they had opportunity to develop ICT skills.

33 The school has well-established links with the local community that make a good contribution to learning. Visitors regularly come into the school to enhance the daily act of worship, and pupils are encouraged to take their talents into the community including entertaining at the local hospice and residential homes. There are close links with other schools and with Dudley College. The local secondary school visited, for example, and gave a performance of *Macbeth*. There are reciprocal visits, and a number of secondary students gain useful experience of work placement at Bromley Hills. Some of these students have a natural talent for working with younger pupils and make a useful contribution in the classroom.

34 A broad range of extra-curricular activities is in place, ranging from French and choir for the younger pupils to Latin and sports activities for older ones. The good range of extra-curricular activities gives pupils opportunities to mix with those from other classes and to compete in sporting activities with other local schools. The provision of school clubs compares well with that found in many other primary schools. Literacy teaching and the use of library books in school make a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development.

#### Equal opportunities and provision for special educational needs

35 The school is committed to providing equal opportunities for all pupils, and for the most part pupils have full access to the curriculum. Staff are alert to differences in performance between boys and girls, and are taking some initiatives, for example to improve the writing of older boys. This is having a beneficial influence on standards. Arrangements for delivering support and improving standards in the form of booster classes and withdrawal groups are not satisfactory, however. Some younger pupils are regularly withdrawn from mathematics lessons for additional work in English, and this has an inevitable impact on their learning in mathematics. Older pupils miss out on some science and geography lessons to take part in booster classes. This, too, creates concerns about their progress in the relevant subjects.

36 A number of pupils with special educational needs have significant visual impairments and receive expert specialised support. As a result they make progress that is at least good. Pupils who have other learning difficulties are supported by classroom assistants in literacy sessions and by a teacher who withdraws pupils on a regular basis to develop reading strategies. This intensive support helps pupils to use phonics and to develop technical reading skills, but is not always best designed to support them in their other work in the classroom.

37 The special educational needs co-ordinator, who is employed for only two half days each week, takes an overview of pupils' progress and undertakes the annual review of those who have more significant difficulties. Individual education plans are prepared conscientiously, but targets tend to be too ambitious and diffuse. Although detailed in some respects, the plans are not specific enough, and do not help teachers to measure short-term progress in small stages. As a result they are little used by staff in their day-to-day planning for these pupils in the classroom. Individual education plans do not cover numeracy, and this is a further shortcoming.

#### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

38 Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, is now good. Collective worship complies fully with legal requirements and appropriate arrangements are in place for pupils who do not attend assembly.

39 Provision for spiritual development is good, an improvement since the last inspection. Assemblies provide moments for quiet reflection and themes provide regular opportunities to develop spiritual awareness. Pupils sing a hymn or say a prayer. There is a planned programme of visitors, almost exclusively Christian, and the pupils enjoy regular visits by the vicar and a local evangelical youth group. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on particular aspects of life and to consider the impact on the planet of individuals and countries. Assemblies value the pupils' out-of-school achievements and celebrate any charity work undertaken. Topics such as 'life cycles and changes' help younger pupils develop a growing sense of themselves as unique. The school's sensory garden provides many opportunities for quiet reflection and is increasingly well used in the curriculum. For example, reception children visit it to look for spiders' webs, Year 2 pupils compare leaf shapes and scents, and pupils with visual impairment enjoy quiet moments listening to the sound of the water fountain. Many examples were seen that provided 'special' experiences, for example drama work on *Macbeth*; a science lesson when younger pupils were astonished by the effects of light deprivation on plant growth and a music lesson when the pupils created a wonderful feeling of well-being when singing *Lazy Days*.

40 Provision for pupils' moral development is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Pupils learn to tell right from wrong. School and class rules are displayed throughout the school, and the school's updated behaviour policy includes appropriate recognition in all aspects of school life. Weekly 'reward' assemblies reinforce good behaviour and the efforts of individuals. Pupils are given clear moral direction as teachers consistently encourage good behaviour and respect for others. From an early age pupils are encouraged to consider how they should behave, and the school has begun to plan some time when personal and moral issues can be discussed. Teachers in Key Stage 1 use Bible stories and stories with moral themes as discussion points and In Key Stage 2 the themes are more complex, covering concepts such as poverty, fairness, environmental issues and tolerance. Consideration for the feelings of other people is encouraged, as when one teacher discussed how pupils might behave courteously when offered something to eat that they find unpalatable. The school has a tradition of fundraising for charity, which encourages pupils to think of others less fortunate than themselves in more general terms.



41 Provision for pupils' social development is good, as at the time of the last inspection. From the time they start school, children are helped to settle in, play and co-operate with each other. In lessons pupils are encouraged to share resources and collaborate. Pupils generally take turns, appreciate each other's contributions and applaud each other's successes. Those with visual impairments are integrated successfully into the life of the school. The school's use of its 'praise board' is a visible demonstration of its commitment to valuing pupils' views and feelings. The school creates a climate where pupils want to work together and provides many opportunities for them to form effective relationships. These include 'taster days' at Dudley College. A residential experience for pupils in Year 6 presents them with new challenges away from home. Pupils have some opportunities for independent research in the computer suite and there are opportunities for them to take personal responsibility. These include, acting as class monitors, behaviour and reading buddies, 'litter bugs' and looking after the environmental garden. There is some provision for older pupils to use personal initiative. Pupils regularly suggest their own ideas for fundraising, which include suggestions for charities, making items to sell and running their own stalls.

42 Provision for cultural development was judged unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. This is still the position. Although pupils are helped to become aware of their cultural heritage and to appreciate European and non-European cultures, not enough is planned to raise awareness of the other major cultures present in contemporary Britain. The issue raised at the time of the last inspection, to promote an understanding and appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of society, has still not been adequately addressed, although there have been some improvements in provision.

43 The school organises a range of events, such as the recent *Macbeth* project and regular trips to different museums, all of which increase the pupils' appreciation of culture. In music pupils learn about a number of composers and experience a wide range of music tapes from around the world. They have opportunities to perform in assemblies, plays and dance and some perform in the community. Pupils learn about different countries, times and cultures in history and geography. The current project work on St Lucia is making impressive links with other subjects; including drama, music and dance. The use of 'Bromley Bear' to visit different countries is a recent initiative, which also helps pupils to appreciate places throughout the world. In art pupils are introduced to a range of artists, but these are almost exclusively European. Appreciation of different faiths, traditions and cultures through religious education is limited. Pupils do not have the opportunity to visit non-Christian places of worship and the school has no religious artefacts to support the teaching programme. The range of fiction and non-fiction books to raise awareness of the major cultures present in contemporary Britain is unsatisfactory. The school is aware of the need to improve its provision in this respect. It has made a good start by purchasing equipment and toys that reflect different cultural traditions for the younger pupils.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

44 The governors and all the staff at Bromley Hills are concerned for the health, security and welfare of all their pupils and are committed to looking after them. However, formal arrangements are not yet entirely satisfactory. There is no governor or committee of governors with specific responsibility for health and safety. Fire, glass and general risk assessments have been carried out recently with the help of the local education authority, but this kind of procedure is not yet sufficiently part of day-to-day school life. As a result potential hazards are not always identified and dealt with as promptly as they should be. The headteacher is fully aware of this situation and is dealing with it.

45 Since the previous inspection a fence has been installed around the entire school site. Pupils therefore spend their days in a very secure area and risk has been greatly reduced. At least two qualified first-aiders are on site during school hours and at lunchtime an experienced and supportive

team of supervisors looks after the pupils. Recently there have been improvements to the safety of the site for pupils with visual impairment. The unhygienic and worn out lavatories used by Key Stage 2 pupils are about to be refurbished.

46 Basic child protection arrangements are in place and include satisfactory links with all the appropriate authorities. The headteacher, who has lead responsibility in this area, is well trained and knowledgeable, but there is an urgent need for all the other staff to receive some appropriate refresher training.

47 The school's policy and approach to behaviour and discipline has recently been overhauled and a whole school behaviour monitoring system is being introduced. There is no separate bullying policy, but there is a written code of conduct and reminders of what is expected are on the walls around the school. As a result the general standard of behaviour is good. A system of sanctions and rewards, which pupils support and understand, deals with any problems that do occur, including any incipient bullying. Teachers and all the support staff are well aware of their pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Pupils are congratulated when they do well and encouraged to succeed through reward systems such as the new and popular house-point scheme. Major achievements and success over long periods of time are recognised with much-prized certificates from the headteacher and celebrations at whole school assemblies.

48 The inspection team has looked into the complaints of some parents about the use of punishment of whole groups of pupils in response to individual misdemeanours. This unacceptable practice has undoubtedly taken place in the recent past. The headteacher has confirmed that group punishment forms no part of the school's approach to discipline and that appropriate steps have already been taken to prevent its use.

49 Attendance levels, which were criticised by the previous inspection team, are still below national averages. The governors, headteacher and staff are well aware of the bad effect that unsatisfactory attendance has on pupils' learning and are working hard to improve the situation. Parents and carers are reminded frequently of the need for regular attendance and in-term time holidays are actively discouraged. New procedures for monitoring and dealing with attendance problems were introduced at the beginning of the current school year, and where necessary the local education welfare officer has been involved. As a result the number of pupils with less than 80 per cent attendance is now down to 4 per cent of the total number of pupils on roll. Registration procedures still need to be tightened up so that they are consistent across the whole school, and to ensure that latecomers are not missed (see also paragraph 69).

50 Procedures for assessing, monitoring and supporting pupils' attainment in English and mathematics have improved since the last inspection. The school has worked hard to make the best use of National Curriculum assessment data and that from optional tests to track pupils' progress and to target areas for improvement in these two subjects. However, in science the procedures are less well developed and in the other subjects of the curriculum are either inconsistently used or non-existent. There is a realisation amongst subject managers that they need to develop assessment and recording procedures for their areas of responsibility and this aspect is a feature of their future planning.

51 The assessments carried out in English and mathematics are well used by the school to plan its provision of targeted help for pupils such as additional literacy support and extra help with mathematics. They are also used effectively to decide on the formation of groups and sets and to determine levels of classroom support. Class records contain detailed, relevant information about the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils in areas such as reading, the use of phonics, speaking and listening and mathematics. The school is beginning to set individual pupil targets, and these are

discussed with parents during consultation evenings. Pupils are not always clear about the targets set for them and how they can be fulfilled, though.

52 The school has yet to develop formal procedures for the monitoring and supporting of pupils' personal development, but is very well aware of its responsibilities in this area. However, thorough records are maintained when pupils have problems with their behaviour or learning difficulties. Staff in the VI Unit maintain first-rate records.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

53 Parents are happy sending their children to Bromley Hills Primary School. They know that most of the children like school and are confident that they are making steady progress. Almost all wholeheartedly support the new headteacher and are delighted with recent improvements. They are confident that under the new headteacher's leadership Bromley Hills will continue to develop and improve.

54 The governors, headteacher and staff value parents' views and ideas. The answers to a questionnaire, which was sent to parents at the beginning of the school year, have helped set priorities and plan for the future. As a result of another consultation with parents, plans for a new, on-site, breakfast and after-school club are now well advanced.

55 The arrangements for introducing new pupils into the reception class are good. They include visits during which parents and their children look around the school and opportunities for the children to join in the reception class play and story times. There is a comprehensive booklet about life in the reception class. These preparations help children to settle into school well.

56 Formal documents such as the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are already well put together. Plans are well advanced for substantially revised versions that will contain even more information about the school. Regular newsletters keep parents in touch with what is going on. They also contain reminders, for example about attendance procedures, ask for parents' ideas and feedback and advertise jobs in school.

57 Some parents, including some whose children have special educational needs, feel that they do not know enough about how their children are getting on. The school attempts to keep parents formally updated about their children's progress through one-to-one meetings, which are held every term, and an end of year report. Unfortunately only 70 per cent of parents attend consultation meetings, for reasons that are not clear. Reports, whilst covering the whole curriculum, lack real evaluation of pupils' progress and provision for parents' feedback. The school is well aware of these shortcomings. Initiatives to improve attendance at meetings and the quality of reports are in the pipeline. Informal arrangements for keeping parents in touch with their children's progress are satisfactory. Parents confirm that they are welcomed into the school and the headteacher can be contacted at almost any time. There is a straightforward appointment system in place and teachers are usually available at the beginning and the end of each school day.

58 There is a home-school agreement but not all parents have signed up to it. The majority of parents are, however, very keen to work with the school in order to help their children learn, particularly through regular homework. They are therefore critical and disappointed with the school's inconsistent approach to the setting and marking of homework.

59 Up to twenty parents and grandparents are involved in the day-to-day life of the school. Some are employees, but the majority are volunteers who help with such things as reading, netball coaching and school trips. In these ways they are making a useful contribution to the pupils' learning. Since last September a group of parents has worked with the caretaker to redecorate virtually the entire

school, thus helping to provide a much more congenial environment for the pupils. This has made a real difference to the quality of school life. The Friends of Bromley Hills is an active and successful parent-school group that organises social and fundraising events throughout the school year. The money raised makes a valued contribution, helping to fund resources for learning.

60 Some parents feel that there are not enough activities outside lessons. The view of the inspection team is that there is a generally good range of activities such as football, netball, dancing, singing and gardening, as well as a number of trips throughout the school year.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

61 Management was identified as a weakness at the time of the last inspection in 1997. The school had little sense of educational direction and there was confusion about roles and responsibilities at every level. Inadequate teaching and low standards were not being addressed effectively. With falling pupil numbers and too many staff holding promoted posts, the budget came under increasing pressure and the need for redundancies was obvious by 1999. The deputy headteacher started to address some of these problems with the active support of governors during a period when he was acting head. With governors now alert to the school's problems, this paved the way for the very tangible changes now taking place.

62 The present academic year has represented a turning point for the school. Since the appointment of the present headteacher in September 2000, remarkable progress has been made on many fronts. The headteacher provides highly effective, energetic and well-focused leadership, with the need to raise achievement through better teaching top of the agenda. Her analysis of what needs to be done is well founded on the evidence of test information and other data. Key areas for development have been identified on this basis with a sure sense of priority, while planning has been purposeful and systematic. Throughout the year the headteacher has worked hard to raise expectations and standards in every area of school life. She has not been afraid to tackle difficult issues such as the under-performance of some members of staff. Although this has inevitably given rise to tensions, she has succeeded in sharing her aspirations with professional colleagues, as well as with governors and parents. The school is now looking better, standards are starting to improve and staff morale is far higher than at the start of the year.

63 The thrust for improvement is already producing results. There has been a particular focus on improving teaching and learning, backed by a carefully planned programme of monitoring, professional development and training. An innovative feature is the secondment of a skilled teacher from another school to work in classrooms alongside staff, teach demonstration lessons and provide 'coaching' to improve professional skills. The headteacher provides a strong example herself through the quality of her own preparation and teaching in class and assemblies. This sends an important signal in a school where the teaching of some well-established senior teachers is not as good as it should be. The effectiveness of the whole approach is demonstrated by the greatly increased number of well-taught lessons seen during the present inspection compared with 1997. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is also much lower, because strategies are being found to support weaker teachers. This is already beginning to lift standards in English and mathematics.

64 The deputy headteacher has provided loyal support in furthering the improvements now under way, and is in the process of developing a distinctive role complementary to that of the headteacher. The position of deputy headteacher is being further strengthened with the support of the deputy from another school who has been seconded to work on management development at Bromley Hills for one day each week. Again, this shows an innovative approach to school improvement, with the introduction of fresh ideas from outside.

65 Management roles and job descriptions have been reviewed and responsibilities are now defined appropriately on paper, but this remains a school where delegated responsibility is not as yet well understood by everyone. After a period of inaction, there is no established culture of reflection, innovation and the use of professional initiative. Whilst there are capable and hardworking individuals at every level in the school, this is not necessarily reflected in the inherited management structure. Despite willingness on the part of almost everyone, some members of staff are not yet making a professional contribution commensurate with their seniority.

66 Curriculum co-ordination and leadership were heavily criticised in the last inspection report, but this position is now improving. Literacy is well managed throughout the school, and some other curriculum areas, such as ICT, are now being led effectively. Mathematics is developing well as the result of a joint effort by senior staff. In other cases, for example history and art, standards are suffering because of past neglect and inadequate current leadership. The Foundation Stage is not being co-ordinated effectively at present, with no appropriate overview of the curriculum and assessment. Leadership and management of the VI Unit are first-rate, but the co-ordination of special educational needs in the rest of the school is more problematic. The co-ordinator only works for a brief time each week, and this affects the quality of provision, especially the level of communication with class teachers.

67 The role of the governing body has developed rapidly in the past two years. Governors are well informed and are in no doubt about the difficulties still facing the school. They understand that standards are too low and express their determination that the school should continue to improve. Some governors visit regularly, know the staff and are developing a good understanding of the realities of school life. Governors' backing for the headteacher is indisputable. They are doing what they can to support change effectively, for example by lobbying the LEA about the state of the school buildings. Appropriate committees and panels are in place, with good arrangements for overseeing and monitoring spending by the finance committee. The governing body is meeting almost all of its statutory requirements, but there is a need for more clarity about health and safety procedures. At present no committee has oversight of this important area as part of its terms of reference.

68 Financial planning is good. With careful management the budget is not in deficit at the present time, but there are further problems ahead if pupil numbers continue to decline. The headteacher and governors are alert to this likelihood. The headteacher has worked hard to attract additional funding and other resources from various sources, including the LEA. Spending has been targeted very effectively to support the main priorities for development and, in particular, spending on staff development has increased dramatically in the past year. This is entirely justified in view of the drive to improve teaching and learning and to develop teachers' management skills. Most professional development has been highly successful; however, there are reservations about the effectiveness of a costly programme of training to improve teachers' ICT skills. Taken as a whole, the school's programme of professional development and training is already having an effect on standards. Senior staff and governors are well aware of the need to seek 'best value' in their spending decisions, and grant funding is appropriately used for the intended purposes.

69 The school is generally well organised, with sound administrative and financial procedures in place. Shortcomings identified at the time of the last audit report in 1999 have been addressed by and large, although stock records are not yet complete. Arrangements for the registration of pupils, including latecomers, are not tight enough, with teachers adopting different practices and conventions. This has been identified by the headteacher, and appropriate steps have been taken to introduce a consistent system next term. Clerical and administrative support is competent, but there is scope for improving the school's established administrative systems and for reviewing arrangements for internal communication.

70 The school is adequately staffed with teachers, most of whom have been trained appropriately for the primary age-group. The VI Unit is well staffed. In general, however, there are relatively few support staff and these were not always deployed to best effect during the inspection. Whilst the nursery nurse made a highly effective contribution to the reception team, classroom assistants often sat inactive for considerable periods of time at the start of lessons when they could have been more effectively employed. Discussion suggests that this is not typical of the school's usual practice.

71 Learning resources are satisfactory in most subjects, and the new computer suite is likely to transform provision for ICT. There are inadequate resources for construction and outdoor play in the reception unit. The accommodation has been greatly improved by recent redecoration and by some refurbishment. The improvement of the staff room, funded by a special grant earmarked for the purpose, has been important to help lift the spirits of staff. Overall, however, the fabric remains in a poor state of repair and some of the pupils' toilet accommodation is still of an unacceptable standard. There are no imaginative facilities for outdoor play for the reception children.

72 Funding per pupil is broadly average. Taking into account recent improvements and rising standards, the school is judged to provide satisfactory value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

73 The school has already turned a corner and is starting to improve. In order to build on recent achievements and to take the school on further the governors, headteacher and staff should:

**Consolidate the improved standards in English and mathematics and raise standards where necessary in other subjects, especially in science and ICT, by improving teaching further.**

**Particular attention should be given to:**

- setting high standards for the presentation of pupils' work;
- ensuring that all the pupils, including the higher attainers, are sufficiently challenged;
- developing vocabulary and literacy skills more consistently across the curriculum;
- strengthening the use of ICT as a tool for learning;
- addressing specific issues about the teaching of science, art, ICT, and religious education set out in the relevant sections of this report.

(Paragraphs 1-9; 16-24; 27; 108-114; 118-119; 124-125; 136-138; 141-144; 160; 168-170; 189-191).

**Strengthen management and leadership by:**

- tapping into and building on existing strengths at every level in the school in order to maintain the present momentum for change;
- ensuring that all curriculum co-ordinators understand and do what is required of them, improving if necessary their leadership skills and subject expertise;
- seeking ways to develop a culture of professional innovation and initiative.

(Paragraphs 61-66; 90; 120; 140; 145; 150; 155; 163; 175; 183; 187; 193).

**Continue with efforts to improve attendance, ensuring that day-to-day procedures for the registration of pupils are consistently implemented.**

(Paragraphs 15; 49; 69).

74 In addition, the school should consider including the following lesser issues in the action plan:

- **Review the co-ordination and management of special educational needs in the mainstream of the school, to improve communications and to ensure that support is effectively provided in each area of the curriculum.** (Paragraphs 35-37; 66; 115; 128).
- **Ensure effective leadership and co-ordination of the Foundation Stage.** (Paragraphs 66; 88-90).
- **Ensure that all staff receive appropriate up-to-date training in child protection.** (Paragraph 46).
- **Tighten up the school's health and safety policy and practices, ensuring that this area is brought within the remit of one of the governing body's committees.** (Paragraphs 44; 67).

## **The work of the unit for pupils with visual impairment**

75 The VI Unit continues to offer high quality education for pupils with visual impairment. Outstanding features referred to in the previous inspection report have been maintained and developed. Any issues raised have been addressed successfully. The policy of inclusion for all pupils remains strong. Pupils are able to access the National Curriculum, with natural and true integration taking place throughout the school. This involves acceptance by all staff and pupils and incorporates each area of activity. The unit is funded separately by the local education authority (LEA) with direct involvement by the Physical and Sensory Service and has particular liaison with the team leader for the visually impaired. The Service provides help with resources and additional staff, such as the mobility officer and typing tutor. The team leader remains in close contact with the school.

76 At present eight children are on roll. All have moderate to severe sight problems, and are either registered blind or partially sighted in the main. Some have an additional identified problem, such as learning difficulties, movement impairment and asthma. For some pupils pain or dryness in the eyes may cause discomfort, necessitating the application of eye-drops or shading against bright light. Two other pupils with visual impairment are able to cope in mainstream classes without direct assistance, but their progress is monitored by unit staff. The age-range of the pupils concerned is from reception to Year 6.

77 Current staffing includes the head of the unit, who is highly qualified and experienced; together with six support assistants, the equivalent of four full-time members of staff. Most assistants are very experienced and well-qualified to deal with visually impaired pupils. Additionally, one assistant holds the R.N.I.B. Certificate in Standard Braille. In-service training is ongoing. The VI Unit incorporates a resource base containing specialised equipment, an area that is used for withdrawal purposes when needed. Braille is taught for those who need it.

78 The school has a very good working relationship with health and education authorities and is supported very well by outside agencies. Particular value is placed on contact with hospitals and the R.N.I.B. Immeasurable assistance has been given to certain pupils from the Low Vision Centre in Birmingham. The involvement of the Physical and Sensory Service is appropriate and is greatly valued. Full co-operation between the head of the unit and the co-ordinator for special educational needs ensures correct procedures are in place for pupils with additional difficulties. The headteacher, with the backing of governors, is fully involved in the work of the unit and strongly endorses its ethos.

79 All pupils with visual impairment are working to the best of their ability. They make good, sometimes very good, progress against their personal targets and sometimes in relation to national expectations. No child from the unit is disapplied from national testing, though tests may be modified to accommodate specific difficulties. The attainment of pupils with visual impairment is within the same range as the mainstream pupils. Unit pupils undertake all regular tests in class, such as those for reading, spelling and numeracy and optional national tests at Year 5. A group of pupils is at present taking part in a programme linked with Birmingham University to standardise reading for partially sighted pupils.

80 Pupils with vision impairment are integrated into classes with their peer group and are given access to all areas of the National Curriculum. Specialised equipment is available to assist learning, such as magnification aids, raised worktops, closed circuit television and computer programs. All pupils are supported strongly in class by unit staff, who play a leading role in each child's development. Staff are skilled in knowing when to be actively involved and when to move away and allow independent learning. This was particularly evident in the reception unit during the inspection, when staff could stand back and allow the children to make their own choices. Withdrawal is used wisely to include important elements such as training in mobility, typing tuition, introduction of new



vocabulary before a lesson or reinforcement of a concept afterwards. Much of this teaching takes place during break times. Pupils play a full part in all activities. Adaptations may need to be made in practical sessions, such as physical education or craft work to ensure safety. A suitable emphasis is placed on a sensory approach and training in independence. Support is carefully balanced and prepares pupils well for secondary education.

81 Teaching is good for pupils with visual impairment. Mainstream teachers are mindful of strategies which enhance learning, such as giving clear verbal instructions, standing away from the glare of light, allowing more time to complete a task, positioning the child near the front and encouraging personal tidiness. Worksheets are presented clearly, with enlarged print. Unit staff are crucially involved at all stages. An exemplary lesson in reception by the head of the unit was observed during the inspection. This showed careful planning, a patient and encouraging manner and knowledge of the pupil's needs. This ensured continuing interest and maximum learning, enabling the child to reach set targets. Class teachers are enthusiastic and encourage participation. At reception level pupils gained knowledge of exotic fruits by using all their senses. They learnt about size, shape, smell and taste. At upper Key Stage 2 level, a science demonstration of how to make a burglar alarm was conducted directly in front of pupils with sight problems, so they understood the procedure and could apply theory in practice. At lower Key Stage 2, an enlarged diagram of a cake was used on an overhead projector to ensure understanding of tenths. At Key Stage 1 a pupil with limited sight was expected to join in naturally in a games lesson. She responded keenly and made every effort to be part of the group. A teacher's request to a group to work with a partner in a dance lesson at reception brought clear co-operation and enjoyment from the pupils with sight impairment. All staff are involved in monitoring progress and there is close multi-disciplinary co-operation.

82 Pupils with visual impairment try very hard to improve their work. They concentrate well and have an excellent rapport with staff. They interact happily with their peers and each other. Pupils are willing to express their own ideas. There is good awareness of safety matters and understanding of mobility training. The pupils are sensible about keeping things in the right places and of listening intently to instructions. They know the importance of using their fingertips carefully on surfaces in order to discover information. Pupils from the unit interact with others happily in the playground and dining-room. Reflective moments were seen during the inspection, with a child listening in wonderment to the sound of a water feature and expressions of joy when children were touching new objects, such as fruit and model animals. The sensory garden provides many opportunities of thoughtfulness. The pupils in the unit have very good attitudes towards school and to life and try hard to improve their skills. Their personal development is very good.

83 The leadership and management of the VI Unit are excellent. The policy for the unit is clear and is very well structured. Individual education plans have been revised since the last inspection to create more workable documents for staff. They are of a high standard. Targets are totally relevant to individual needs and are regularly amended. Pupils are very much aware of their own aims and objectives. Annual reviews involve school and external personnel, together with parents. Targets are agreed by consensus and are manageable. Requirements set out in the pupils' statements of SEN are being met appropriately. Impressive systems of monitoring and recording are in place, and reporting arrangements are comprehensive. Daily records are written on every child for each activity. The exceptionally good support assistants play a vital role in this exercise. Assessment has become more productive and standards are being raised.

84 The VI Unit maintains close links with parents and sometimes other members of the family. Most parents fully support the school's efforts to provide education and welfare for their child. The majority work with the child at home and feel they can have access to the staff of the unit when they need help. All are involved in annual reviews. The head of the unit has close contact with homes, visiting if needed. He sometimes accompanies a child to the hospital to give support to both child and parent. Parents and staff have raised money recently to equip a kitchen area so that the pupils can

develop life skills. Parents of the pupils are keen to attend school events and support pupils in after-school clubs.

85 Resources are plentiful and up-to-date, taking into account individual requirements. The R.N.I.B. links provide help with additional aids, such as equipment to teach Braille, home support and recently a talking watch. Good use is made of software and auditory tapes. Equipment includes talking calculators, speech synthesisers, magnification programmes and a Language Master. Books in large print, including dictionaries are available, as are Braille printouts of some material. The sensory garden is a special feature. It has been developed in liaison with Dudley College and work continues. Pupils respond to the imaginative and innovative ideas. Braille bricks, for example, are embedded in a wall and along pathways; tubes allow sounds to travel from one part of the garden to another; water trickles over different surfaces and plants are chosen for their variety of fragrance, texture, size and shape. This provides an experience of sensory discovery, valued as a real tool for learning. Accommodation is used well.

86 The school provides a supporting and stimulating environment in which each child with a visual impairment can develop skills and strengths for the future. Facilities offered to pupils with visual impairment are exceptionally good. A high level of success is gained through the quality of leadership combined with invaluable support from the headteacher, all staff and pupils. Inclusion is very effective in every aspect of school life. Awareness of differences has led to a better understanding and acceptance of the problems of visual impairment by all members of the school. The close working relationship amongst unit staff and their impact on the rest of the school are major factors in the success of the integration programme. The work of the unit is very good, with many features of excellence. The VI Unit remains a strength of the school and a facility to be proud of.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	78
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	15	33	45	4	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*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	Y1 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/a	329
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	43

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	Y1 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	13
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	53

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	46
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	26

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.2

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	1.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	23	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	16	20
	Girls	17	19	20
	Total	34	35	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72 (80)	74 (78)	85 (80)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	20	18
	Girls	19	20	16
	Total	36	40	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (82)	85 (80)	72 (94)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### *Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	27	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	14	21
	Girls	18	13	22
	Total	31	27	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	61 (59)	53 (50)	84 (57)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	13	17
	Girls	19	12	20
	Total	30	25	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	59 (59)	50 (52)	73 (59)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	4
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	286
Any other minority ethnic group	7

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22 : 1
Average class size	27.4

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff (including SEN unit)	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	285

### ***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.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	702110
Total expenditure	686205
Expenditure per pupil	1880
Balance brought forward from previous year	701
Balance carried forward to next year	16606

***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	329
Number of questionnaires returned	100

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	44	12	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	47	9	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	56	13	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	58	17	2	1
The teaching is good.	28	60	10	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	42	22	8	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	38	9	6	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	48	7	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	57	10	8	1
The school is well led and managed.	43	47	6	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	27	63	4	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	48	21	5	4

## **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**

87 The reception unit currently caters for 32 pupils, including two with visual impairment. Children join reception during the term they are five and most have previously attended the Bromley Hills pre-school unit, which is an independently managed facility. At the time of the last inspection, links with the pre-school group were very limited but since the appointment of the present headteacher this has improved. Liaison and induction arrangements are now good. On entry to reception, attainment is measured on the Dudley accredited baseline assessment scheme. The results suggest that attainment is at least average for the age-group. Most children are now making satisfactory progress in reception. The pupils who are visually impaired make good progress because of the use of adapted equipment, the consistent support they receive and the quality of teaching. By the time the children are ready to start in Year 1, most will have achieved the national Early Learning Goals, with a significant minority working within level 1 of the National Curriculum. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory in communication, language and literacy, numeracy, physical development and creative development. Standards and achievement are good in personal, social and emotional development and in knowledge and understanding of the world.

88 There is evidence from the children's work that teaching and learning were unsatisfactory at the beginning of the year and that progress was not then good enough. Teaching was not planned in sufficient depth or matched closely enough to the Foundation Stage curriculum. Activities were not matched closely enough to the different abilities of the children. The headteacher has begun to address this issue and the appointment of an additional early years teacher has made a significant contribution to the quality of the teaching and planning. The curriculum provided is now satisfactory with many interesting and stimulating learning activities. While progress is now generally satisfactory for the majority of pupils, the more mature children have begun to make better progress in literacy and numeracy because they are now organised into targeted groups.

89 Teaching is generally satisfactory, with many good examples, but one lesson was observed where the teaching was unsatisfactory. Where the teaching is particularly effective, the more able children make good progress and the activities are well matched to the different learning needs of all. In otherwise satisfactory lessons, there remain some weaknesses in teaching. Expectations of what the children can achieve are not always high enough and the pace is at times too slow. Good quality teaching is generally provided by a member of the team who has a good understanding of the early years curriculum. The nursery nurse is an asset to the team and supports the children well.

90 Planning is now appropriately matched to Early Learning Goals, and a Foundation Stage curriculum is being developed. However, there are weaknesses to address in the organisation and management of the Foundation Stage. Assessment is unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection, with no established procedures. The children are not assessed regularly enough or in sufficient detail. The teacher with responsibility does not involve the rest of the team enough in assessing the children's needs. The assessments in use do not match national targets for the age-group, the Early Learning Goals, so gaps in children's skills are not clearly identified. This is a weakness that is hampering progress to some extent. The co-ordinator does not exercise her role to ensure that there is a coherent overview of the curriculum and that consistent assessment systems are in place.

91 The unit is organised into two classroom areas but efforts have been made to provide shared areas for role-play and creative work. The unit's outdoor play area is dull and there is little to stimulate the children. Resources, while adequate, need to be improved. There is not enough good quality construction equipment, large outdoor equipment or attractive books in good condition.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

92 This area of learning is well taught and the progress made is generally good. The children enjoy their time in school, feel secure and are for the most part enthusiastic about new learning. The children are generally well behaved, and friendly. Adults treat each other and the children with courtesy and respect. Topics in the curriculum, such as celebration and homes, encourage the children to value themselves, their families and other people. The staff ensure that the children understand what behaviour is expected through the use of consistent rules, lots of praise and a reward system for good work and behaviour. The children love to receive stickers for their individual caterpillars! Children show independence in dressing and personal hygiene, and staff encourage them to help each other with buttons and shoes. They are given some personal responsibility for taking messages and looking after equipment. Most children work well in small groups and are beginning to work and play independently. Children in the home corner and role-play areas play independently, without too much adult intervention. The staff discuss children's personal needs informally with parents, as they arise. Children with special educational needs, especially those with visual impairment, are very well integrated socially.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

93 The teaching of communication, language and literacy is satisfactory throughout the reception unit. The range of attainment is typical of the age-group. Most children express themselves well and enjoy sharing their own ideas, making good progress with their speaking and listening skills. They enjoy joining in nursery rhymes, sharing big books and listening to stories. The role-play area is used effectively to provide a context for speaking and listening, reading and writing. For example the topic on travel incorporates a reception desk and phone at the 'airport'. Children use holiday brochures to get information, make phone calls, complete passports and tickets. They enjoy these opportunities, which extend their use of language to think, imagine and express themselves.

94 Although teaching is now satisfactory, when the older children first started in reception the work planned shows that activities were not sufficiently challenging or matched to different levels of maturity. This has now been addressed. Children are now making better progress because they are grouped for their literacy work. The quality of teaching that the higher attaining pupils receive is good. Daily literacy sessions provide opportunities to learn about print and text, using attractive big books like *Hamda's Surprise*. Most children concentrate well during literacy sessions. They look at print carefully, retell the story and suggest their own ideas. Most understand basic punctuation such as full stops and speech bubbles, and many can pick out groups of words and sounds from the text. Higher attaining children write simple sentences on their own, using word lists, dictionaries and their knowledge of sounds. A group of less mature children are still working towards the Early Learning Goals and some have difficulty forming their letters. They recognise and use simple words like 'a', 'and', 'in' and 'is' and write with adult support. Children have informal opportunities to write independently for a variety of purposes.

95 Children choose their own books from a graded range, which are usually at an appropriate level. All children handle books appropriately. The higher attaining children read with increasing fluency and lower attaining children attempt to match words and sounds to the story. Home reading diaries are attractive and provide useful information for parents; they include targeted homework. Both classes have a reading corner, but these are small and the book provision is limited. They do not



have comfortable seats or cushions for children to share books with adults and little evidence was seen of children relaxing and sharing books informally during choice times. Children enjoy reading and sharing books with community 'reading buddies'.

### **Mathematical development**

96 Teaching and learning are sound, and as a result the children make steady progress in their numeracy skills, reaching an average level for their age-group. Regular informal opportunities during registration are used to count, compare and measure and join in number songs. This helps children become familiar with mathematical language, which they use with confidence. Children have a daily numeracy session during which they have opportunities to explore numbers and mathematical ideas through a variety of practical and stimulating activities. Teachers make and share some attractive resources, such as the ladybird addition games, and number ice-cream cones. These stimulate children's interest. The nursery nurse is deployed well in these sessions to support children's learning. The use of number games, number lines and number grids to 100 all help give children confidence in using and reading numbers. Children of average maturity count forward and backwards and order numbers accurately within 10, whilst some attempt numbers to 20. The higher attaining children count and record within 20 and add and subtract within 10. They generally form their numbers accurately. Most of the youngest and least mature children have secure number awareness within 10, and are starting to read and write numbers, although some reverse their numerals.

97 Teaching is now satisfactory. The children are now making better progress because they are grouped for their mathematical work. Whilst teaching is now satisfactory overall, there is still a difference between the quality of teaching that groups of children receive; this affects the progress of some. The abler children receive good teaching, but at times teaching of the lower attainers lacks pace and expectations are not always high enough.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

98 Teaching provision is good; children are eager to learn and make good progress, reaching above average standards. Children have an understanding of time passing, being older and younger and can talk about their home and school, themselves and their families. They have good opportunities to explore and investigate. They make models from recycled materials, and most cut and stick independently. They are encouraged to use their senses, for example smelling, describing and feeling different fruits. They have observed and recorded changes; for example when ice melts and jelly sets. They learn about living things. They use the sensory garden to look for small creatures, and look for patterns in spiders' webs.

99 There are planned opportunities for the children to develop their cultural awareness. Some pupils receive French tuition, which is effectively taught at a level appropriate for the age-group. Their topic on travel provides opportunities for the children to learn about countries around the world, including Africa and India. The use of 'Barney Bear's' video and diary photos of travel has captured the children's imagination. Children have learnt about the festivals of Christmas and Diwali and the Chinese New Year. However, the role-play area does not include clothing or home objects from different cultures.

100 The children have experience of using computer programs to reinforce literacy, numeracy and topic work. They have been taught to use a mouse and click and move objects around the screen. They use computer programmes to 'dress Teddy' and to follow a simple map. However there is no record of what they can do and individual computer skills are not systematically developed.

## **Physical development**

101 Children make sound progress in their physical development and attainment is average; however expectations are not always high enough and the more capable children could achieve more. Outdoor provision is unsatisfactory and the area is unstimulating. There are no wheeled vehicles, climbing equipment, seating or sheltered areas. The children use the school hall for a physical education lesson once a week. In this lesson they listen to instructions with understanding, use small and large apparatus safely and learn to balance.

102 Good progress was made in a dance session because of the enthusiasm of the class teacher and the use of exciting 'rain forest' music to stimulate their interest. In the single unsatisfactory lesson observed, the activities were over-directed and the pace of the lesson too slow. While the children used the bats, balls and beanbags sensibly, they were not given enough opportunity to explore.

103 From the earliest time in the unit the younger children safely handle a variety of tools and equipment such as scissors, paintbrushes, crayons and glue. By the time they enter Key Stage 1 they have developed appropriate skills in cutting, sticking, and joining and have experimented with a range of materials and resources. Although the children have opportunities to explore materials themselves, activities are sometimes too closely directed. There are not enough construction kits to encourage appropriate exploration with a variety of materials.

## **Creative development**

104 Children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning and reach the expected standards. They are encouraged to develop their creative talents in music and role-play sessions. They enjoy joining in with familiar songs and rhymes. The children hold, identify and name correctly a number of percussion instruments. However, musical instruments are generally kept in the school hall, so children do not have enough informal opportunities to handle and explore instruments.

105 Children have opportunities to use a range of artistic techniques; including painting, printing and collage. They paint human figures and animals and attempt observational drawings of different fruits. Children's own work is displayed, but there is a lack of three-dimensional display. Provision for role-play and opportunities for them to use their imagination have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The children enjoy these sessions, which make a good contribution to their social and language skills. They sustain interest and concentration for long periods of time without adults present, and play well together.

106 In a particularly effective session, pupils explored the world of travel imaginatively, both in an aeroplane and airport. They were able to suggest places to visit and role-play different jobs. The timely interventions of staff from the VI Unit extended all the children's learning, whilst ensuring that those with visual impairments were able to participate and enjoy the experience to the full.

## **ENGLISH**

107 Recent national test results have shown standards well below average. Although there has been some fluctuation since the last inspection, attainment has generally been far lower than that described in the 1997 report, when standards were said to be average. End of Key Stage 1 SATs in summer 2000 showed that attainment in reading was well below national averages. In writing it was a

little higher, but still below the national average. The number of pupils failing to reach the expected level 2 in reading and writing was higher than the national average. The only positive feature was that the number of pupils reaching the higher level 3 in writing was better than average. The end of Key Stage 2 SATs in 2000 showed that standards of attainment were well below the national average in English. Boys performed particularly badly last year and a significant number of pupils did not even reach level 3.

108 Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 2 pupils are now achieving standards in line with national averages. Pupils in Year 6 are also achieving standards broadly in line with those achieved in other schools. The school has placed a very high priority on raising standards in literacy over the last year. The reasons for lower standards have been analysed and steps taken to improve the performance of all pupils. Teachers and pupils have responded well to the challenge to raise standards, especially in writing, by the end of Year 6. The school has worked hard this year to improve the quality of boys' writing and to raise standards in both reading and writing for all pupils. The accelerated progress during the current year means that achievement is now good in Year 6. Nevertheless standards are not yet as high as they could be especially for the more capable pupils, more of whom could reach above average standards.

109 Speaking and listening skills are in line with national expectations by the end of the reception year, and continue to develop steadily throughout both key stages. Pupils in Year 1 are already talking confidently and discussing the stories they have heard and read. Some read aloud with expression and talk sensibly about the characters in their reading books. Most pupils speak fluently using a wide vocabulary to explain their reasons for using particular words which rhyme and match the sounds they have learnt. From Year 2 onwards, standards in speaking and listening continue to improve, pupils speak clearly and make confident contributions to class discussions showing a good general vocabulary. However, they do not show a strong grasp of technical terms, for example when talking about science. Year 6 pupils were strikingly confident when presenting their theories as they unravelled the emerging plot surrounding Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and other characters in the Shakespeare play. They interpreted the original text and were inspired by watching and discussing the plot and characterisation with real actors. The pupils developed various facets of the character they were watching. They were enthused and inspired by the questions and propositions the teacher suggested, using a range of texts to find equivalent words and similar situations familiar to them.

110 By the end of Year 2 standards in reading are broadly in line with the national average. Achievement is mainly satisfactory, but pupils in one Year 1 class have not made the same good progress as others in their year-group. Above average attainers use a wide range of strategies to attempt unfamiliar words and to extend their reading skills. By Year 2, these pupils learn to read texts at an appropriate level and develop good comprehension skills. They know how to find information from a non-fiction book and look up words in the dictionary. By the time they are seven, average pupils are able to recognise when they make errors in their reading and correct themselves. However, their understanding of the story they are reading is not always secure. They recognise but do not always pay attention to full stops and question marks. Those experiencing difficulties with their reading are adequately supported in improving their understanding of phonics and pictorial clues.

111 Standards of reading are average by the end of Year 6, but in some other junior classes progress is not consistent and some average pupils are still achieving below what would be expected for their age-group. One reason for this is that books are not always precisely enough matched to the needs of the pupils, despite the fact that the school has organised its reading materials effectively into bands of progressively greater difficulty. All pupils maintain a reading diary which has a similar format throughout the school, enabling parents and carers to make comments and monitor progress. Although pupils use the diary as a record of books they have read, they do not receive enough guidance on the skills they need to improve on as they proceed through the school.

112 In Year 3, pupils with average and below average reading skills improve steadily, because they are taught to apply their knowledge of sounds effectively. A number of pupils receive intensive support at this stage to develop and improve these skills, enabling them to make good progress in the technical skills of reading and spelling. By Year 6, most pupils are fluent and competent readers. Above average and average pupils read independently with good expression and respond to the punctuation to good effect. They show some insight into characterisation. Pupils throughout the school read with obvious enjoyment. Their reading covers a range of texts including fiction, non-fiction and classical plays, in addition to the school's reading scheme. There are planned opportunities to develop pupils' research skills during their literacy work, but the lack of a central library limits opportunities for the development of research skills in subjects across the curriculum. Most pupils nevertheless have a secure understanding of basic library skills, knowing how to find particular books and explaining the purpose of an index and glossary.

113 By the time pupils are seven they reach an average standard in writing. Many can plan and write short stories, whilst a number of more able pupils can write at greater length. More able pupils in Year 2 write detailed stories using tenses correctly, punctuated with full stops and capital letters, and using direct speech. Teachers provide sufficient stimulus and support all the pupils by giving them clear guidance and prompts. Pupils have a wide vocabulary and their stories are interesting and well written. However, they are not given enough opportunities to develop their skills in other areas of the curriculum. The scrutiny of work in pupils' books indicates that handwriting is not good enough. Some pupils are using incorrect letter formation, which makes it difficult for them to write fluently and to start to join their letters.

114 Pupils in Year 4 have a secure understanding of grammatical structures and write in an appropriate style for some purposes, such as instruction writing, composing limericks and Haiku poetry. The school's focus this year on extending writing skills in Years 5 and 6 is having a positive effect. By the end of Year 6 standards are broadly average and pupils have a clear understanding of how to plan their writing. They use a wide range of vocabulary, paragraphs and a range of punctuation, develop points and persuade their audience to consider reasons and arguments. However, much of this writing is based on exercises and unrelated tasks. Insufficient opportunities are given for pupils to extend their writing skills in science, history, geography and religious education lessons. Little use of word-processing to draft or re-draft writing was seen during the inspection or in pupils' previous work.

115 Pupils with special educational needs who are experiencing difficulties with their learning are generally supported well in their literacy development and make steady progress. Some tasks are designed effectively to help them to contribute to the class discussion. They receive specific teaching and intensive support to improve reading and writing skills. Their confidence develops as they tackle areas of technical weakness, but there are occasions when the support is not used to the greatest effect and does not help pupils who are finding difficulty in understanding what they are expected to do. On some occasions pupils are bewildered by the complexity of the task and fail to make progress as a result.

116 Pupils behave well and good relationships exist between pupils and teachers. Teachers plan their work together and support each other. The co-ordinator has worked hard to improve the guidance, strategies and resources to develop the subject and expand teaching and learning for English. There is a diversity of approach based on the literacy strategy, which helps both teachers and pupils to improve their performance. In all classes pupils listen carefully; for example when their class teacher is reading from *Macbeth*, they sustain a keen interest in the plot and respond very well to the complex questions which the teacher asks. Pupils work independently and co-operate well when working together in pairs or groups.

117 The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall with some that was very good. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Where teaching is good or better, there are references to clear learning objectives in planning, teaching and learning, good classroom management and secure knowledge of the subject being taught. For example in Year 3, in a day of lessons directed towards improving pupils' knowledge about the Caribbean, pupils examined and discussed the fruit grown in St Lucia. They used a wide range of reference books, developing their research skills in response to questions. The teacher used prompts and clues very skilfully so pupils could respond using a wider range of vocabulary and techniques, for example scanning a text, using inference from the photographs and illustrations. Pupils were assisted in writing their own poetry. They recognised and used alliteration to good effect which they shared with other pupils in a celebration at the end of the day. In Year 2 detailed planning linked to the teacher's high expectations ensured that pupils completed the first draft of a story using a plan and refining their ideas. The pace of the lesson helped pupils to think quickly. The good use of whiteboards to draft and then edit the sentence provided the stimulus for every pupil to develop his or her own story. As a result the pupils made good gains in their learning, having to speak clearly to others and to develop their handwriting skills.

118 There are some aspects of teaching that, whilst satisfactory, could be improved. In lessons that are less effective, teachers' knowledge of the subject is only adequate and the pace of the lessons is not brisk enough. This leads to some lack of attention and distracting behaviour. Pupils' books and files show that some teachers have not given enough attention to the presentation of work in the recent past. The day-to-day marking of pupils' work is not consistent. Whilst there is some careful and constructive marking, some teachers do not give sufficient guidance to the pupils about how they could improve.

119 The school recognises the need to refine the English policy and develop further guidance in relation to revised National Curriculum requirements. The school spends a lot of time developing spelling, handwriting and extended writing in addition to the literacy strategy which is taught for an hour each day. The standards achieved in pupils' writing do not reflect the time spent on various skills. Pupils complete too many isolated tasks and exercises which are not connected to their current topic and are not always related well to their learning needs. Literacy is not promoted well in subjects other than English. Classroom assistants support pupils in literacy, but support is not always targeted at the appropriate time in the lesson and could be more effectively used, especially when pupils are learning to apply new skills in reading and writing. The classes held to boost attainment in literacy are proving successful, especially in developing pupils' phonic skills. This is supporting the general improvement in standards.

120 Leadership and management of the subject are now good. The school undertakes appropriate standardised tests as a check on progress. The co-ordinator has started to analyse effectively the information gained from tests and to target pupils' progress more efficiently. Reading records for group reading are being developed but are not yet consistent across all classes, and the records for individuals in some instances are not detailed or monitored sufficiently. The school has begun to develop a portfolio of levelled and annotated written work so that teachers and the co-ordinator can monitor the progress made by pupils and draw comparisons between different groups. The headteacher and co-ordinator have undertaken careful monitoring of teachers' medium-term planning, and this has helped to improve the delivery of the literacy strategy. The knowledge gained through recent in-service training is being shared by all staff. The co-ordinator has some opportunities to monitor teaching and learning throughout the school. She has exercised some influence on the work of other teachers by disseminating and building on existing good practice. Resources are adequate, but the absence of a school library limits the development of pupils' reference skills. The school is looking at ways of improving the situation by using local libraries to teach these skills.

## MATHEMATICS

121 Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 for the past three years show that performance has been consistently well below average when compared with other primary schools nationally. When compared to similar schools the performance in mathematics has also been well below average. In summer 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 was particularly low, indicating that higher ability pupils were underachieving. This pattern was mirrored in Year 2. The pupils at the end of the infant stage achieved test results that were also well below average when compared with all other schools. Too few pupils reached the higher level 3.

122 There are strong indications that standards are now improving rapidly. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work show encouraging signs. There are good indications that performance in national tests in 2001 at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 will be better than in past years. Important areas for improvement identified at the last inspection were the development of infant pupils' abilities in carrying out mental calculations and also the effective application of mathematical skills throughout the school. These areas have both improved. The school's successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and its positive response to other government initiatives is beginning to pay dividends, especially in terms of improved standards of mental calculation and number work.

123 Average and above average pupils in Year 6 have a secure understanding that percentages are fractions of 100. They have grasped the idea of equivalent fractions and are making the necessary links between ideas of proportion, ratio, percentages and fractions. The older pupils have a satisfactory grasp of place value, which they apply in the multiplication and division of whole numbers, and have a secure recall of their multiplication tables. They are undertaking work on coordinates at an appropriate level, estimate and calculate the perimeter of simple shapes and understand how to record data using a frequency table. In Year 2 most pupils are also working at the right level for their age-group, with a good basis of practical experience to reinforce their understanding of fractions, measures and weighing. The pupils have quick recall of mathematical facts to ten, which they apply in adding and subtracting two-digit numbers, with a developing understanding of place value.

124 Achievement is sound overall. The average and below average ability pupils now make satisfactory progress at both key stages. However, progress for the more able is less secure. Some lessons do provide the right level of challenge, especially in Year 6. Exercise books show that higher attainers tend to complete more work than the rest, but at a level that is not demanding enough in some year-groups. Support for lower attaining pupils is often good in lessons, enabling them to make steady progress, but the individual education plans of those with special educational needs lack targets for numeracy. Support in mathematics for these pupils is not focused well enough.

125 Teaching in number work throughout the school is now good overall. Lessons have purpose and pace, resulting in the pupils making steady progress. In the infant classes the teaching is invariably at least satisfactory, with two thirds of the lessons being good or very good. In the junior classes teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good with two thirds of the lessons also being good or very good. Teachers organise their maths lessons into three parts. Almost all mathematics lessons open with a very lively session of quick questions showing strong teaching and developing rapid recall by pupils of number facts. The result is that by Year 6 nearly all pupils are confident in carrying out addition and subtraction to 100 mentally and most have little trouble in multiplying pairs of numbers to ten. The main teaching activity is always relevant and pupils engage in calculations, practical work and recording. The final part of the lesson where there is a drawing together of the main teaching and learning points is, in most cases, too rushed to be totally effective. This has been identified as an area to work on by the school. All areas of the National Curriculum in mathematics are covered appropriately. In most lessons the work is properly planned to match different levels of ability, but there is scope to improve this aspect by providing still more challenge for high attainers.

126 Mathematical skills are applied to other curriculum areas such as measurement in design and technology. In science at Year 5 pupils have investigated the rate at which hot water cools and plotted their observations using line graphs. This work is good, but there are still too few opportunities to extend the use of mathematics in other subjects. Computers are occasionally used to support work in mathematics through the production of graphs and charts. ICT is also used to support work on movement and direction. A group of Year 1 pupils confidently and enthusiastically showed how to input instructions into a programmable robot so that it would avoid a number of obstacles set in its path. Valuable learning had taken place and the pupils thoroughly enjoyed demonstrating their skills in estimating distances, direction and rate of turn. In general, however, the potential of ICT to support the understanding of mathematics is at an early stage of development within the school.

127 Learning in mathematics lessons is good, with little time wasted. Throughout the school the teachers have high expectations of behaviour. Through thorough lesson planning, a calm and friendly manner and appropriate use of resources, the pupils are managed successfully. Both infant and junior children work well in groups, in pairs and individually. They are interested in their work and, in almost all cases, concentrate their efforts on the task set. Classroom assistants often provide sensitive support to lower ability pupils. The good ratio of adults to pupils in mathematics lessons is valuable, although sometimes time is wasted during the introductory part of the lesson. Particularly impressive and effective is the support given to visually impaired children to ensure that they are fully integrated in mathematics lessons.

128 The pupils in Key Stage 2 are taught in groups set by ability. In addition some pupils in Year 6 are receiving extra support through booster classes and pupils in Year 5 receive additional support through the 'Springboard' arrangements. These arrangements are proving effective. Setting creates good opportunities to match work closely to the ability of the pupils. Across both key stages the most able pupils are often presented with additional work, but this is too often more of the same sort that they have already undertaken successfully. There is not always enough challenge for these pupils. This was a concern at the last inspection and it still persists, but to a lesser degree. The match of work for low ability pupils is also rather patchy. Scrutiny of exercise books shows that for these pupils there is too much work that is incomplete, a lot of it pitched at an inappropriate level. In Years 1 and 2, the withdrawal of lower ability pupils from mathematics lessons to receive additional work in language impedes their progress and is counter-productive. Homework is set for mathematics, but inspection evidence suggests that this is not particularly productive. More thought needs to be spent on its purpose and organisation.

129 The main focus recently has been on improving pupils' skills in number. This has been successful and has not been at the expense of investigative and practical work. Lessons were seen in infant classes where pupils estimated the capacity of various containers and then checked these through filling them with rice. Not only are the pupils extending their concept of volume, but they are also learning to make careful observations and developing the skills of co-operation and collaboration. The lessons are thoughtfully planned, well organised and well resourced.

130 Mathematics is given a high profile in classroom displays through vocabulary lists, number lines and table squares. In one classroom there is a good range of puzzle activities on display to engage the pupils' curiosity, including *Tic-Tac-Toe* and *Crossing the River*, and also information on the work of famous mathematicians including Pascal's triangle and the Fibonacci series. The use of displays to stimulate discussion and capture imagination and interest in the beauty and power of maths and number is a positive feature. However, there are too few examples of pupils' work to celebrate their achievements in mathematics effectively.

131 A relatively weak aspect is the use of day-to-day assessment. The marking of pupils' work is not rigorous enough and little opportunity is taken to use marking as a means of extending and

reinforcing learning. Some pupils' exercise books show extensive uncorrected work, especially in the early part of the school year. A revised school policy on the marking of pupils' work is urgently needed. Most teachers make evaluations of teaching but these are not well used in improving the match of work to the needs of the pupils.

## **SCIENCE**

132 At the time of the last inspection, standards in science were found to be slightly above average by the age of seven and slightly below at eleven. National test results at eleven were broadly average in 1997 and 1998, but showed a sharp dip in 1999, when the school's performance was well below the national average. This was followed by a partial recovery in summer 2000, but results were still below both the national average and the average for similar schools. Whilst an average number of pupils reached the expected level 4, only 20 per cent compared with 34 per cent nationally reached the higher level 5. Boys did particularly badly in 2000, but over a three-year period test results show virtually no difference between the performance of boys and girls. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in summer 2000 showed that numbers reaching the expected level 2 were well below the national average, and very low in comparison with similar schools. However, an average number of pupils reached the higher level 3.

133 Inspection findings are that standards are now broadly average by the end of Key Stage 1, but remain below average at the end of Key Stage 2, despite improvement in the past two years. Whilst Year 6 pupils have secure factual knowledge in all the major strands of science, their investigative skills are under-developed and they find it difficult to talk about their work using appropriate terminology. Some well motivated and capable pupils are under-achieving for these reasons.

134 The pupils are now making satisfactory progress in Year 1 and Year 2, and are reaching an appropriate level for their age-group by the end of the key stage. They have a sound understanding of the topics they are working on, with above average knowledge of life processes and living things seen in current work on plant growth. With highly effective teaching, pupils in a Year 1 class show a good understanding of the basic conditions needed for plants to flourish, and are fascinated by the results when seedlings are grown with limited water and light. The pupils in this class make sensible, sometimes thoughtful, predictions. In one lesson, for example, a higher attaining pupil predicted that a row of seedlings grown in restricted light would lean towards the light in a specific pattern. She was puzzled when her logical idea did not quite fit the outcomes. By the end of Year 2 the pupils understand the main purposes of the flowers, roots and stems of plants and have ideas about different methods of seed dispersal. They observe and can describe variations in the colour, shape and scent of flowers and leaves, and are beginning to understand that living things thrive in a variety of habitats.

135 In discussion, Year 2 pupils recall past work on materials and physical processes securely. They understand that electrical equipment requires a complete circuit if it is to work properly, and describe the effects of magnetism, but without using correct vocabulary such as 'attract' and 'repel'. The pupils' understanding of scientific enquiry is less secure, but they do know that scientists use tests to gain information and that these need to be fair. Above average pupils are starting to put forward their own ideas about how tests might be carried out. The written work of Year 2 pupils shows that they make effective use of illustrations, diagrams and short pieces of writing to record their findings, but limited use of charts and tables. There is little use of measurement at this stage.

136 Standards are below average by the end of Key Stage 2, and achievement is unsatisfactory. The written work in files shows that over time many pupils have not made the progress that they should have done until they start to catch up in Year 6. The pupils tend to complete the same work regardless of their aptitude and as a result there is under-achievement, especially on the part of the higher attainers. Worksheets used until recently in Years 4 and 5 are undemanding, sometimes



designed for younger pupils and requiring only a short phrase or simple illustration by way of response. When the pupils do write down their conclusions they have difficulty in phrasing their ideas accurately. Even in Year 6 pupils are still offering explanations such as 'because you are using your body faster your blood has to go faster'; or even 'friction can slow things down and make things faster' (from an above average pupil). Files show that right through this key stage the pupils have had limited opportunities for practical work and independent investigations in the course of the year. As a result they have had no chance to plan for themselves how to set up a fair test, select equipment and record results. They have little idea of why tests often have to be repeated many times, although the most capable pupils do know that numerical data can be averaged. There is not enough use of graphs to demonstrate patterns in the pupils' findings.

137 Pupils in Year 6 have undertaken thorough revision of the content of the Key Stage 2 programme of study and have a secure grasp of most of the factual information that would be expected. They have an understanding of the workings of the human body, including the functions of some organs, describe clearly how to separate simple mixtures and distinguish between reversible and irreversible changes. Their understanding of physical processes such as air resistance is less sure, but they have been taught how to measure forces using a Newton meter. A positive feature is the pupils' ability to apply their scientific knowledge, as when they make a pressure pad designed to set off a buzzer.

138 Teaching is now satisfactory at both key stages. However, there have clearly been many shortcomings in the recent past. Some of the written work in the files of the Key Stage 2 pupils is of a low standard, reflecting inadequate teaching and weak subject knowledge. There are many examples of charts without headings, diagrams with no labels and unfinished pieces of writing. Almost invariably all the pupils have undertaken the same activities, with nothing to challenge the most capable. The pupils' work has been marked carefully in some classes, but in others serious misunderstandings and inaccuracies have been accepted without challenge. In work on gravity, for example, an older pupil wrote that two balls dropped from a height hit the ground at the same time 'because it takes a greater force to move the heavy ball and get it going'. This was ticked as correct.

139 The teaching seen at first-hand during inspection week presented an entirely different impression, with good or very good teaching in more than half the lessons seen. Some of the best teaching was in Key Stage 1 and the early stages of Key Stage 2. In these highly successful lessons a great deal of learning was taking place, with accelerated progress producing high standards. In a Year 1 lesson on plant growth the teacher communicated her enthusiasm to the class, saying 'I can't wait to show you how our plants are growing'. The pupils responded with keen interest and anticipation, making rational predictions about the effects of too little water or light on the plants. They were genuinely shocked by the sickly appearance of the seedlings grown with no light, which created quite a sensation. Good use was made of the sensory garden to demonstrate plant variety in another Key Stage 1 lesson. In a Year 3 lesson on shadows a particular strength was the way in which the pupils' existing understanding was explored through questioning and this knowledge extended in a series of logical steps. Highly effective use was made of the overhead projector to demonstrate some of the features of shadows, and pupils were encouraged to articulate their explanations using very precise language and the correct vocabulary. The pupils were excited and enthusiastic about this interesting lesson, which provided a very good introduction to the concept of how light travels in straight lines. On another occasion, a Year 4 group was working on the effects of exercise and rest on the pulse rate. Here the teacher allowed the pupils time to formulate carefully worded predictions, which she skilfully edited into a hypothesis to be tested. The teaching of investigative skills and the principles of fair testing was highly effective in this session, which provided plenty of opportunity for the pupils to think for themselves.

140 Management of the subject is generally satisfactory, but science has not had a high enough profile in recent years. Curriculum documentation is out of date and does not reflect current practice,

but this is in the process of being replaced by the use of materials produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. After a transitional period, sound plans are in hand to ensure full and balanced coverage of the science curriculum from next year onwards. There remains a considerable way to go in developing end of unit assessments and in sorting out science resources.

## ART AND DESIGN

141 Despite pockets of good quality work, overall standards are below average at the end of each key stage and the pupils are not making sufficient progress. The older pupils in particular are under-achieving because they do not have enough opportunity to develop and express their own ideas in a range of media. They lack the experience, technical understanding and grasp of terminology to evaluate their own work and respond thoughtfully to the work of other artists. There are few indications that individual talents are being identified and nurtured. At the time of the last inspection standards were judged to be in line with national expectations, so this represents something of a decline since then.

142 Although below average, standards are not as consistently low at Key Stage 1 as at Key Stage 2, and some work in individual infant classrooms is similar to that seen in other schools, sometimes better. Work based on Monet in one Year 2 class provides one such example, with effective impressionistic work done in paint, pastels and paint. In general, though, the pupils are not regularly exploring ideas, creating individual designs and communicating through art even at this key stage. A case in point is collage work in Year 2, where representations of pots of flowers are decorative and together make a strong visual impact. The work has been carefully executed by the pupils, but to a uniform formula, showing that the pupils have exercised little individuality in the design or personal choice in the materials. The standard of drawing at this key stage is mainly immature, but this improves noticeably when the pupils focus on this skill. When Year 1 pupils were asked to make observational drawings of plants they had grown in a science lesson, some of the results were good for the age-group, showing close attention to detail such as tiny buds at the leaf axils. In general, however, the pupils do not have enough experience of looking carefully, making choices, talking about their work and suggesting how it might be improved. Three-dimensional work seen at this key stage was limited to weaving, using paper or wool.

143 The older pupils are not undertaking work in art and design on a regular enough basis, and much of what they do gives limited scope for the imagination, as in some dull work on perspective. The pupils do have sketch books, but these are of poor quality and the paper is not heavy enough to allow them to collect ideas or to test effects of colour and texture. Sketch books are not being used appropriately in many classes, suggesting limitations in teachers' subject knowledge. Year 6 art folders consist entirely of work in two dimensions and show a limited range, with over-use of felt-tipped pens and ready-mixed paint. Portraits completed recently are of generally poor quality for eleven-year olds. With sound teaching, pupils in Year 5 respond with interest to paintings by Picasso and have learned something about the development of his style. Higher attainers make sensitive comments about how his work *Guernica* represents the horrors of war, but do not readily use the correct terminology when talking about visual and tactile elements. When painting a wartime scene in one lesson, very few Year 5 pupils thought of applying a wash, almost all starting on the detail of the foreground first. Some made a detailed pencil drawing and then proceeded to 'colour in' their work with ready-mixed paint. The results were predictably below average.

144 Only two lessons in art and design were seen during the inspection, one at each key stage. The teaching at Key Stage 1 was just satisfactory, and competent teaching was seen in Key Stage 2. Both lessons were appropriate for the age-group concerned, but one lacked pace and as a result some pupils lost concentration. Pupils enjoy the practical aspects of art and design and manage their resources and working space well. They are generally positive about their work and that of others. On

an occasion when a younger child was unkind about the work of another the teacher handled the situation very effectively.

145 The subject has not been managed effectively for some time and the recently appointed co-ordinator has not had time to make a difference except by working on the organisation of resources. There is no clear plan for developing the subject, and a way forward now needs to be sorted out if standards are to rise.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

146 Standards in design and technology are in line with those expected nationally of pupils at the age of seven and eleven years old. The school has maintained the standards reported in the inspection of March 1997. Evidence of standards was obtained from a limited number of lesson observations, a scrutiny of pupils' work and a review of the portfolio of photographs kept by the subject co-ordinator. Throughout Key Stage 1 pupils are given a range of experiences in the use of different materials and are taught the basics of the design process; they are also made aware of the need to handle tools safely. For example, Year 2 pupils have produced clearly labelled designs for a wind-up 'Little Miss Muffet' spider in response to a challenge set by their teacher. They have also produced drawings, lists of materials and written explanations for the design of a snowman. The resulting models were of good quality and demonstrate the developing skills of the pupils.

147 In Key Stage 2 pupils continue to develop their ability to follow through a design process. For example, designs produced by Year 6 pupils used skills developed in mathematics and English well to make a 'potato box'. This involved the drawing of the net for the shape, accurate measuring and clearly written instructions. As part of the process the pupils produced sound written evaluations of their designs. The literacy skills of pupils are further developed through their work in the subject, for example, their ability to follow verbal and written instructions and explain what they are doing when asked.

148 Overall pupils adopt a positive attitude towards their design and technology work, showing enthusiasm and a pride in what they produce. They are willing to discuss their work and co-operate well with each other and with their teachers. They are sensible in the way they handle tools and materials and are, on the whole, well behaved. This is contributing towards the steady progress made.

149 Teaching in both key stages is satisfactory, with some good teaching. Teachers seek to develop the ability of their pupils to handle materials safely, emphasising the importance of the proper use of tools. Adult support is used well to increase the number and range of the experiences available to the pupils. Teachers give good quality explanations of what the pupils are to do and how they are to do it, for example, the very clear explanation given by a Year 6 teacher on how a button should be sewn on. In a well planned session on food preparation in Key Stage 1 the teacher ensured that all the resources needed were easily available and clearly focussed on the lesson objectives. This good level of lesson organisation provided an equally valuable learning experience for the pupils involved. The progress of pupils with special educational needs, including those with visual impairment is no less than that of their peers.

150 The management of the subject is on the whole satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator is very aware of the development needs of the subject. At the present time the scheme of work is under review to ensure that it provides continuity and progression. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop a whole-school system for recording of the development of pupils' skills, an aspect that was the subject of comment in the report of March 1997. There is a portfolio of photographs that is useful as a means of recording work done, but this lacks written work by the pupils, explanations of designs and evaluations for example.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

151 Standards in geography at the end of both key stages are in line with those expected nationally of pupils of seven and eleven years of age. The school has maintained the standards noted in the inspection of March 1997. Because a limited number of lessons were observed, evidence of standards was also obtained from scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with pupils and teachers and a study of lesson plans. Pupils in Year 1 have studied their journeys to school and written about what they see on the way. This work has led to the production of simple maps of the route. Pupils in Year 2 discuss the differences between the locality in which they live and another at an appropriate level for their age. They understand the use of maps and are able to list some of the information given on them, for example, towns, roads and points of the compass. When talking about their own environment they are able to distinguish between man-made and natural features of a landscape. They are, for example, able to say that fences, houses and shops are man-made, whereas trees, grass and hills are natural features.

152 In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 5 have studied the reasons why people choose to live in certain places, for example the Lake District. This work has been developed to include work on the origin of place names, thus forming a good link to history. In another link to their history work pupils have studied the ancient world, marking the positions of Mount Olympus, Ithaca and Athens on maps of Greece. They can find a position on a grid using four-figure map references when working on Ordnance Survey maps. Higher attaining pupils have studied the course of the River Usk and produced some good extended writing describing its journey to the sea. They have an awareness of the power of water to change the environment, for example the formation of flood plains and channels. Pupils in Year 6, in some well produced extended writing, have shown an awareness of the arguments for and against the development of areas such as Antarctica. In their writing they are able to present a balanced argument for and against mining in the region.

153 As no lessons were observed in the subject in Key Stage 1 it is not possible to form a judgement on the quality of teaching. In Key Stage 2 teaching is satisfactory overall with some good lessons. Where teaching is good, staff ensure that the pupils understand the purpose of the lesson, exercise effective class control and ensure that support staff are well used. They make good use of resources such as overhead projectors, maps and photographs. In the majority of lessons pupils make satisfactory progress, for example, in their ability to distinguish the changes in an area over a seventy-year period using maps. Where teaching and learning are less effective the work is not planned carefully enough to ensure that the pupils make as much progress as they might. Pupils with special educational needs and visual impairment make similar progress to their peers. In both key stages pupils demonstrate satisfactory attitudes towards the subject.

154 The learning of pupils is further enhanced by the good provision of field trips and visits. For example, Year 1 pupils have an annual visit to the Wyre Forest Visitors' Centre for combined science and environmental studies. In the autumn term they go on a local area walk to study their immediate environment. Pupils in Year 6 have been on a visit to 'The Leys' on a walk that focussed on changes in the environment. The school also arranged for the pupils in Key Stage 2 to visit the 'Environmental Bus'.

155 The subject co-ordinator is well aware of the development needs of the subject. He has carried out a subject audit and as a result has decided on a complete overhaul. The local education authority advisor is giving valuable help in developing a new scheme of work. The co-ordinator understands the need to rationalise assessment arrangements so that progress can be tracked more accurately. The school has addressed some of the concerns expressed in the report of March 1997 and is aware of the need to continue to improve its provision for the subject.

## HISTORY

156 By the age of seven standards in history are below national expectations for pupils of this age. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have acquired further knowledge and limited understanding about the past, but standards are still below national expectations. The pupils have some understanding of the past but confuse different periods of time and events. Due to timetable arrangements it was only possible to observe two lessons in the junior department and none in the infants. Judgements on attainment are based on a scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussion with both pupils and teachers.

157 The last inspection team found that the scheme of work required greater definition and pupils should be able to link topics and areas of study. The school has prioritised literacy and mathematics and this has constrained both the time and resources available for other subjects. The result is that provision in history has not improved sufficiently. The curriculum now in place has been modified since the last inspection but has not been reviewed in the light of National Curriculum 2000. Progress is limited by the lack of detailed planning to address how events in the past are understood. Pupils do not have sufficient experience of researching from a variety of different sources, in order to explain how people used to live in different periods of time.

158 At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have some understanding about times past. They can recognise that Jesus lived 2000 years ago and can put in order when famous people were born during the last two centuries. They learn about famous people but do not recognise the impact they made on other people's lives. Pupils display an interest in the subject but do not recognise significant events from the times when parents or grandparents were their age. There is a lack of writing and recorded work, and the use of resources such as CD-Roms is not yet developed. Other resources are effectively used, but only as displays to draw pupils' attention to various topics.

159 Visits related to history topics are well planned and include the Black Country Museum, an Egyptian exhibition, the Air Museum in addition to special days which have an historical theme.

160 By the age of eleven pupils have studied a wide range of historical topics but not in any depth. Writing skills are unsatisfactory, with too much reliance on worksheets to be filled in and pictures to be labelled. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 know about the Romans and the Vikings, and understand how a Norman castle was a strong form of defence. They identify the various parts of the castle and understand how the residents lived and worked within the walls. In Years 5 and 6 written work is developing and pupils are using limited research skills to explain various events, for example how people reacted to rationing and evacuation in the Second World War. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 demonstrate extended writing skills when drawing comparisons about life in the 1960s and the present day. There is a lack of independent research in these topics, however, and pupils are often constrained by the use of worksheets to record their ideas and knowledge. These are usually the same for the whole class, irrespective of individual learning needs.

161 Teaching was judged to be satisfactory during the inspection. The pupils behave well and show they are interested in the work. They demonstrate good listening skills and higher attaining pupils demonstrate a willingness to answer complex questions. In a successful lesson in Year 4, pupils used the information they had absorbed from a video about Norman castles. The use of skilful questions as they watched the video, focussed pupils' attention on the relevant points, encouraging short related answers using the appropriate historical vocabulary. In a Year 6 lesson pupils used their knowledge from a visit to the local museum about mining conditions and were able to empathise about working conditions for children in the last century. They drew comparisons and used emotive words to demonstrate how different life is today. The use of an original report assisted pupils to

appreciate different styles of writing and the use of words. The teacher carefully guided the discussion and pupils responded well to her ideas. In discussions with more able pupils they have some understanding of time and could recognise how the local area had changed the lives of people who lived and worked in the Black Country.

162 Too little thought has been given to the use and development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in the history curriculum. This results in pupils being given too few opportunities to write at length, to take notes and to interpret historical events. The marking of pupils' work is unsatisfactory and does not give them enough indication of how to improve. Teachers are not monitoring pupils' progress sufficiently and lower attaining pupils are often asked to complete inappropriate tasks which do not relate to their individual education plans or match their needs.

163 The co-ordinator has other responsibilities in the school and subject leadership is not satisfactory. There is some overview of teachers' medium-term plans but no monitoring of the quality of teaching or learning. There is adequate coverage, but current planning fails to take into account new national guidelines. At present there is not enough awareness of what needs to be done to improve provision for history.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

164 At the time of the last inspection standards of attainment in information and communication technology were regarded as satisfactory. Standards in ICT are now below average overall at both key stages. Pupils have had too little experience of the subject, and this has resulted in weak information technology skills.

165 A good beginning is made in Year 1. The pupils use computers to produce charts to illustrate investigations on eye colour, party foods and transport. They have experience of feeding instructions into a programmable robot, enabling it to steer an obstacle course. A group of pupils demonstrated this skill confidently and enthusiastically. A highly successful lesson was seen at Key Stage 1 in which the pupils learned to record sequences of instructions in a common format. This provided a valuable introduction to work on control technology. Observations confirmed that Year 1 pupils are relatively skilled in manipulating the mouse and using the computer keyboard. However, there is little to show that this good beginning in ICT is sustained throughout the school.

166 Teaching seen during the inspection in individual lessons was at least sound and often well taught, but unrepresentative of work that has been undertaken over a longer term. In a lesson on control technology, Year 5 pupils prepared a sequence of instructions to manage a set of traffic lights. The choice of software was particularly appropriate, enabling pupils to focus on the task rather than being bogged down by unnecessary procedures. Pupils in Year 5 are learning to access the Internet and cut and paste work into a publisher programme. In Year 6 they are learning to use material from the Internet to develop a PowerPoint presentation. The lessons using the Internet are well organised and valuable learning takes place.

167 Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is sound. In the lessons seen in Key Stage 2 teaching varied from being barely satisfactory to very good, but was good overall. The best lessons seen were demonstration lessons given by the headteacher and a seconded teacher. Class teachers were present and supporting these lessons, so valuable in-service training was taking place too.

168 At present, teachers have limited expectations and are not maximising opportunities for pupils to use computers to enhance learning in all curriculum areas. This is particularly so in numeracy and literacy lessons. Too little use is made of ICT to research information to support

learning in history and geography or as a tool in science and music. Pupils in Year 6 have had no experience of using e-mail at school. There is very little work around the school produced by pupils using word processors, and the basic skills of choosing different fonts, sizes and style and importing illustrations are not evident. There is little to be seen of work using spreadsheets or databases. As a result of the limited range of experience over time, pupils' knowledge and skills are below what they should be by Year 6.

169 The pupils throughout the school are enthusiastic about ICT and, as many have access to computers at home, they are keen to share their views and are generally knowledgeable about the impact of computers in daily living. A group of Year 6 pupils eagerly described how they were applying the knowledge gained in using PowerPoint at school to projects that they were developing at home.

170 The school has struggled to keep up with developments in ICT and to exploit its potential to support learning. The last inspection report drew attention to the relatively old age of equipment and software. The situation has changed, as the school has recently invested heavily in ICT equipment. This is of high quality and the subject is now appropriately resourced. There is a very well equipped computer room containing thirty Internet connected computers and there is a computer linked to the Internet in every year group. However, the computers in the classrooms are under-used and the potential to use these to support learning across the curriculum is not fully appreciated.

171 The newly established ICT suite has provided a much-needed impetus to improve standards, although this facility has not yet been brought into full use. There are plenty of computers, and pupils do not have to share. A projection system enables the teacher to demonstrate what is happening on the computer screen. The level of teachers' skills in managing these facilities to their best advantage is very variable.

172 Older pupils make some use of the computer room before school starts. These pupils work sensibly and with light supervision. This reflects on the good level of behaviour of the pupils and well-earned trust. In these sessions pupils share skills and knowledge and those who do not have use of a computer at home are gaining considerably. This less formal access is a good initiative and well worth extending. Pupils are not allowed to use the Internet unless supervised and this is an appropriate restriction. The good behaviour of the older children in the computer room is also reflected in lessons where pupils listen attentively and help one another overcome difficulties. In the best lesson the teacher not only used oral instructions but also distributed an easily followed written checklist of instructions for the pupils to use independently. No checklists of procedures are displayed in the computer room or classrooms, however.

173 Very good provision is made for visually impaired pupils in ICT lessons. Additional software is used and sensitive adult help provided to ensure that these pupils participate fully in the lessons.

174 The teaching of ICT skills and knowledge and the use of ICT to support teaching and learning are important areas for development throughout the school, but improvement is embryonic at this stage. There has been a heavy investment in staff training, but this has not been wholly effective and is not yet reflected in teachers' knowledge, understanding and confidence.

175 The newly appointed co-ordinator recognises the urgency in putting in place effective systems for recording pupils' developing skills and establishing means of monitoring teaching and planning. Much remains to be done and the postholder is making positive efforts in driving forward progress in the teaching and learning of ICT throughout the school.

## **MUSIC**

176 Pupils throughout the school attain the standards expected for their age and enjoy their music-making activities. Teaching is good and the pupils, including those with special educational needs, make generally good progress. The school has maintained the standards described at the time of the last inspection. The overall judgement is based on a combination of the teaching seen in classes, singing during assembly, extra provision and discussion with pupils.

177 At Key Stage 1 singing is generally tuneful and enthusiastic; most pupils join in during lessons and in assembly sessions and listen well. Year 1 pupils use 'body percussion' to create music for the story *Hairy Scary Castle*. Pupils in Year 2 name some percussion instruments. They hold and use instruments with appropriate safety and care. They know that music gets louder and softer and can be described as higher or lower. They are able to maintain a steady beat. Most pupils sing in tune and stop and start promptly when directed by the teacher. They experiment with sounds and enjoy the opportunity to share their music. They perform in front of the class and each other with confidence.

178 In Key Stage 2 lessons are lively and fun. The use of time when all Year 3 /4 pupils come together for a music session in the hall is particularly effective. The three teachers share their expertise and encourage and motivate the children. As a result of clear direction pupils make good progress in their singing as they are taught how to improve their breathing. The pupils adapt their singing to create different moods and their contrasting performances of *Lazy Days* (slow and calm) and *Lunchtime Queue*, a calypso song, (lively and upbeat) are really atmospheric. They create their own accompaniments and different groups know when it is their turn, because they listen carefully. In Year 5, pupils' composing and musical skills are extended appropriately. They know how to represent a half beat visually and are beginning to create more complex compositions. They combine sounds, using correct notation, from memory and keep their beat following a 'rhythm master'. Most read and follow different rhythms against four and eight-beat sequences, and use rhythm grids.

179 Pupils enjoy singing in assemblies, and hymns such as *Thank You, Lord* create the right atmosphere for collective worship. However the singing in assemblies is not always as lively as in the music lessons.

180 Teaching is generally good. The teachers' planning is detailed and strategies such as the use of prompts make learning easier for the pupils. The teachers use correct terminology, but some learning activities are not always challenging enough for the more able pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on the quality of their music and singing. Across the school the teachers encourage the children to see themselves as performers and composers. For example in a Year 2 lesson, pupils created their own compositions to illustrate weather words such as 'shower', 'drip' and 'thunder'. In Year 5 the use of the atmospheric music of music by Jean Michel Jarre encouraged pupils to reflect on how to compose music that sounds like machinery.

181 A small number of pupils undertake regular tuition sessions in brass, woodwind, strings and keyboard. They show perseverance in practice sessions, are able to read music unaided and help each other in their learning. These sessions provide further opportunities for pupils to extend their musical talents. However a number of pupils miss parts of other subjects to attend tuition sessions. The school provides opportunities to perform in public, which the pupils enjoy. Younger pupils perform for different classes and in productions such as *The Bossy Christmas Fairy*. Older pupils regularly use their skills in the community; performing at a local hospice and at residential homes. There is a lunchtime choir for pupils from Year 2 onwards, who take part in local festivals. They are currently practising for a performance at Merry Hill Centre for the Dudley Borough Festival. All of these opportunities enrich the quality of music provision for those pupils involved.

182 Music is used well to support dance and drama. These opportunities, together with the range of music from different times and cultures, make a good contribution to the pupils' social and cultural



development. From discussion with pupils, they are enthusiastic about music and particularly enjoy opportunities to perform; however, their actual knowledge of composers from the past is limited.

183 The music co-ordinator has her own action plan and has updated the curriculum, which is now appropriately based on the Dudley model scheme. The co-ordinator has no opportunity to monitor teaching and learning which limits her ability to support staff in their delivery of music. The resources are satisfactory but a few instruments need to be repaired and replaced.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

184 The standards reached in physical education by pupils of seven and eleven years of age are broadly in line with those expected nationally, as at the time of the last inspection. The school provides a satisfactory range of activities and those observed during the inspection included games, gymnastics and dance. Swimming is taught to pupils in Years 3 and 5 using the pool at a local comprehensive school. In Year 1 pupils demonstrate an ability to remember and reproduce a sequence of movements, forming them into a simple dance. They discuss their work and that of other pupils sensibly and make suggestions about how their performances can be improved. Pupils in Year 2 observe rules whilst playing games and show an awareness of some of the tactics involved. Some of the younger pupils have not yet developed a real awareness of the space around them and this sometimes leads to bunching during lessons and increases the danger of collisions during practical activities. In Key Stage 2, Year 5 pupils have satisfactory batting and throwing skills; however these are in need of further development if the pupils are to become fully proficient. In Year 6 pupils interpret movement words such as 'slither', 'slide' and 'freeze' into short dance sequences. They alter the speed, shape, height and direction of their movements effectively.

185 The attitude adopted towards this area of their work by the pupils is good in both key stages. They show a willingness to demonstrate their skills to others and they accept the comments made on their performances. During lessons pupils work hard to improve their skills and co-operate well with each other and with their teachers. In team games they play by the rules and are generally well behaved.

186 The quality of teaching and the learning it develops is satisfactory overall, and good in some lessons. Pupils of all abilities are provided with worthwhile learning experiences. Where teaching is good teachers ensure that the ability of pupils to move imaginatively is developed. They ensure that pupils are given the opportunity to demonstrate and discuss their skills. For example, in a lesson on dance the teacher successfully encouraged the pupils to demonstrate how they would show a feeling of joy. These activities build up the confidence of pupils and develop their ability to perform a series of movements, often in co-operation with others. During lessons teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and are able to demonstrate the skills they are seeking to develop in the pupils. In a lesson on games tactics the teacher developed the ability of the pupils to think tactically and throw a ball to make catching easier, with good demonstration of the skills involved. At the beginning and end of lessons teachers use warm-up/cool down exercises well and ensure that pupils understand the reason for them.

187 The management of the subject is generally satisfactory and the school has met the main recommendations made in the report of March 1997. However, there is still a need, of which the co-ordinator is aware, to consider how best to record pupils' progress. During the inspection it was noted that there are unusually large number of pupils in Year 6 not taking part in physical education lessons. The school has not given enough consideration to the reasons for this unacceptable situation. The subject co-ordinator ensures that the Dudley scheme of work is complied with and that the resources available for the subject are adequate and in a good, safe condition.

188 The school has organised residential trips to the Kingswood Centre near Wolverhampton where the pupils are given the opportunity to experience sports such as canoeing, archery, wall scaling and go-karting. This helps to broaden horizons and build confidence. There is a good range of competitive sports available to the pupils in the school that include football and netball. The school offers a wide selection of games experience with cricket, tennis, basketball, gymnastics and cross-country running.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

189 By the age of seven attainment in religious education is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus; however by the age of eleven standards are below average. Although progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 1, including that of pupils with special needs, it is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2. While all the teaching seen during the week was satisfactory, with a good lesson in Year 2, the teaching overall in Key Stage 2 is unsatisfactory. This is because not enough of the curriculum has been taught and, in particular, the teaching of major faiths has not been taught in enough depth for the pupils to make progress in this area. As standards at the time of the last inspection were judged to be satisfactory, this is a weakness that particularly needs to be addressed. The school has appropriate arrangements in place for the five pupils who withdraw from religious education.

190 By the end of Year 2, pupils have studied a range of religious and Bible stories such as Noah's Ark, Rama and Sita, Lazarus, and have learnt a little about the festivals of harvest, Diwali, Easter, the Passover and Christmas. The work covered in their files shows some learning about Jewish, Christian and Muslim beliefs. They have also looked at the creation story. From discussion with Year 2 pupils, most know that saying a prayer is 'a way of talking to God' and understand that each religion has holy places to worship God. They know the difference between a synagogue and a Christian church and the Bible and the Torah. They know that some people worship at home as well as in a holy place. Many understand the need to respect holy places and objects. Most understand that each faith has celebrations where people might wear special clothes, make food to celebrate and use holy objects. However pupils find it difficult to recall and use the necessary vocabulary with any confidence.

191 In Key Stage 2 more emphasis has been placed on the teaching of Christianity and Judaism than Hinduism or Sikhism. This means pupils do not have sufficient breadth of knowledge to build on. This was evident in a Year 5 lesson on traditional religious clothing, which was taught at a very basic level. From discussion with pupils across the junior stage, it is clear that their knowledge and understanding is limited. They have some understanding of each faith but have not considered the similarities and differences between faiths in enough depth. Year 6 pupils have some general knowledge and have positive attitudes to different religions, but their use of the correct terminology is, again, limited. The pupils have few opportunities to research information for themselves and write about their findings at length.

192 In both key stages the teaching seen in lessons was satisfactory. In a more effective lesson in Year 2, the teacher had borrowed some good quality resources. Questioning was highly effective, using the correct terms. The way the activity was presented also made good use of the pupils' literacy skills. Pupils' attitudes to learning throughout the school are generally good. Most pupils behave well in lessons, listen to each other and are happy to share their own ideas. Pupils with visual impairments have appropriate resources so they are able to participate fully. In some lessons the pace of teaching is too slow and some activities lack sufficient challenge for the more able pupils; this prevents them from making better progress. The teaching of Christianity and moral education throughout the school is in appropriate depth. The teachers make sure pupils feel comfortable discussing sensitive spiritual and moral issues. In both key stages teachers develop the pupils' respect for the environment and the impact of 'special people' like Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa.

193 The headteacher has an overview of the subject, as there is currently no named co-ordinator. She has identified the issues that need to be addressed regarding coverage of the different faiths and lack of resources. Whilst she monitors the planning, there is no monitoring of teaching and learning. Teachers who are less confident in delivering each faith in sufficient depth need more targeted support. The school has adopted the revised Dudley Agreed Syllabus; however not enough of the planned curriculum about major faiths (other than Christianity) is actually taught in Key Stage

2 and there are currently no visits to non-Christian places of worship to enrich the curriculum. Pupils who visited a mosque last year gained a great deal from the experience. Resources are unsatisfactory. The school has no religious objects and teachers have to borrow the visual aids and artefacts they need. While the curriculum makes an effective contribution to the pupils' moral and spiritual development, significant opportunities are missed in Key Stage 2 to enhance their knowledge of the values, customs and beliefs of various cultures. Some classes have attractive displays but generally religious education is not visible and has a low profile throughout the school.