

INSPECTION REPORT

St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103433

Headteacher: Mr L Fadden

Reporting inspector: Mr D Watson
23494

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th June 2002

Inspection number: 196322

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Great Colmore Street Lee Bank Birmingham
Postcode:	B15 2AY
Telephone number:	0121 692 1051
Fax number:	0121 622 6343
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Crowley
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23494	Mr David Whatson	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Physical education	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed What the school should do to improve further
9086	Mrs Rosalie Watkins	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
22841	Miss Pat Jackson	Team inspector	Science Geography Design and technology Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage	English as an additional language
10611	Mr Martin James	Team inspector	English History Music	The quality of the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils Equal opportunities Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

*Criterion School Inspections
Juniper House
23 Abbots View
Abbotswood
Cinderford
Gloucestershire
GL14 3EG*

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School serves a very ethnically diverse community on the edge of Birmingham city centre. There are 193 pupils on roll, aged between three and 11, and 17 attend the nursery part-time. The school is smaller than most primary schools. There are slightly more boys than girls. Although there was an influx of pupils in February 2001 due to the closure of a local school, the school roll has fallen since the last inspection, as social housing has been demolished in a scheme aimed to regenerate the area. Most pupils come from the immediate locality, which has much higher levels of deprivation than those found nationally. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 57.7 percent, is well above the national average. Just over one third of pupils are of a white ethnic heritage and a similar proportion are from an African- Caribbean background, and the remainder come from 12 other different ethnic backgrounds. The three most commonly spoken community languages are Arabic, Patois and Chinese. Nearly six per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is relatively high when compared with most primary schools. Children's attainment on entry to nursery is well below that expected for their age, particularly in the area of communication, language and literacy in which it is low. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, at 35 per cent, is above the national average. These pupils have a wide range of emotional needs as well as specific learning difficulties. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is also above the national average. The rate of pupils' mobility has been higher recently due to the one-off influx of pupils joining the school last year; in previous years levels of mobility have been average when compared to all other primary schools nationally. Five pupils from Kosovo and Yemen have recently been admitted, and most are at an early stage of learning to speak English. During the last two years there has also been a significant change of staff, with the arrival of a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and two new class teachers. Religious education will be inspected separately by a Diocesan inspector.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with many strong features. In the core subjects, of English, mathematics, and science, most pupils attain standards that are below average at the end of Years 2 and 6, however, all pupils achieve well because of the good teaching and the good quality education they receive. Pupils' attitudes towards school and learning are good. The very strong leadership of the headteacher provides a sharp focus and clear direction for the work of the school. The school receives exceptionally high funding, but provides satisfactory value for money, as this funding is spent to very good effect.

What the school does well

- All members of the school's leadership and management team provide highly effective direction and support for the work of the school.
- All pupils achieve well, especially in English, mathematics and science because of the good teaching they receive.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and their needs are particularly well met.
- An enriched curriculum interests and engages pupils in their learning.
- The very good moral and social provision encourages the development of sensible and considerate individuals.
- The vibrant quality of provision in the nursery and reception classes motivates and stimulates all children to become keen learners.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology across the school.
- The support of parents in ensuring their children attend school regularly.
- The use of assessment to track the progress of specific groups of pupils.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to the parents and carers of all pupils in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in June 1997. Because of much better teaching, the greater use of assessment, and more tightly planned learning opportunities, standards have risen in many areas. All the key issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been addressed, although the impact of recent improvements in the quantity and quality of resources for information and communication technology is not yet evident. The strong and committed team of teachers and governors, along with the headteacher, are all very focused on achieving further and sustained school improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools ¹	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	D	E	E	B	very high A* well above average A above average B
Mathematics	D	D	D	B	average C below average D
Science	D	E	E	C	well below average E very low E*

Although the results in the table above are not good when compared with all schools, they are more positive when compared with similar schools. Over the last few years, the number of pupils in each year group has been small and the proportion of pupils with special education needs has also varied from year to year. Bearing this in mind, standards overall have steadily improved since the last inspection. The findings of this inspection show that the pupils currently in Year 6 have reached standards that are below average in English and mathematics, but average in science. These show an improvement upon the test results in 2001. Based on their prior attainment, all pupils achieve well and, sometimes, very well. The school set very challenging targets for the tests in 2002, however, inspection findings and teachers' assessments indicate that these are unlikely to be met, although there is likely to be an improvement upon the results in 2001.

When compared nationally, the results of the national tests in 2001, taken by pupils at the end of Year 2, showed standards to be well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers assessed pupils' attainment in science to be also well below average. In comparison with similar schools, standards were below average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. On the basis of this year's unvalidated test results for reading, mathematics and science, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level is higher than in 2001. Given that the children's level of attainment on entry to the school is well below average, and the inspection findings show standards at the end of Year 2 to be below average, most pupils achieve well, and sometimes very well.

Although the results in previous national tests showed that boys did not do as well as girls, there was no noticeable difference in their attainment during the inspection. The standard of literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school are lower than expected. Pupils achieve the expected level by the end of Years 2 and 6 in design and technology, history, music, physical education, art and design, and design and technology and generally make good progress. In geography, pupils at the end of Year 2 reach the expected level but standards are lower than expected at the end of Year 6. Standards are below the expected level in geography at the end of Year 6. Due to the limited opportunities in information and communication technology, standards are well below expectations at the end of Year 2, and below expectations at the end of Year 6 and all pupils make unsatisfactory progress.

¹ 'Similar schools' are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

In the nursery and reception classes, all children achieve well due to the very good start they receive. Most children in the reception class are on course to meet the expectations in all the areas of learning by the time they start Year 1.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are eager to learn and most work very hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils respond well to the expectations of the school, so that it is an orderly and pleasant community.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' relationships, both with each other, and with staff, are very good. Older pupils develop a sense of responsibility and a real understanding of how their actions affect others.
Attendance	Attendance is unsatisfactory. It is slowly improving, but too many parents still let their children miss school without any valid reason.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and so is its impact on pupils' learning. The small class sizes make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and overall good progress that pupils make. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good, due to the pace, vigour and appropriateness of the planned learning experiences. This is why pupils achieve so well. Teachers' planning is particularly good, so that the needs of all pupils are carefully met. Throughout the school, pupils benefit significantly from a committed team of adults with whom they have very good relationships. These trusting relations provide a secure environment in which pupils happily learn. Almost all the teachers have consistently high expectations of behaviour and standards. Pupils respond well to teachers' expectations that they try their best. Clear explanations, well-focused activities and probing questions make learning both enjoyable and relevant. Homework is regularly set, and includes regular reading. It reinforces what pupils learn in school and actively encourages parents' involvement in their child's learning. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills are good, but computer skills are not adequately taught.

The teaching in the nursery and reception classes is good. In the reception class, it is particularly vibrant and challenging. Children are excited by the experiences they are offered, they thoroughly enjoy their work and make significant gains in their learning. There is also good teaching in the nursery, where children make good gains in their personal and social development, although the occasional instance of unsatisfactory teaching hinders the development of some other basic skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality of the curriculum is good overall. It is well planned, with good links between many subjects, but not information and communication technology. Pupils with diverse needs and backgrounds are given equal opportunities to be involved in all aspects of the school. There is a good range of activities out of class that enrich pupils' experiences at school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils receive much help and support from their teachers and support staff, and they make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Pupils at the early stages of learning English are, in most cases, given carefully targeted individual support and, where possible, their home language is valued and built upon.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision made for pupils' personal development is good overall, and very good for pupils' moral and social development. The school represents most of the cultures of its pupils reasonably well and prepares them appropriately for life in a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school takes very good care of pupils and has very effective procedures for monitoring and supporting their personal development. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are also very good. However, the school does not always monitor the progress made by particular groups of pupils in sufficient detail, for example, in analysing attainment by ethnicity.

There are satisfactory links between the school and parents. Nearly all parents speak well of the school's efforts to develop the relationship between home and school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher provides very strong and caring leadership. He is supported extremely well by the deputy headteacher, and senior management team, all of whom are deeply committed to school improvement. Staff work well as a team and their many positive contributions to the success of the school are highly valued by parents and governors. Their roles are well defined and they all share the same vision for their pupils, which is for high achievement and equality of opportunity.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and give good support to its continuing development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school analyses its results, the quality of its teaching, and the curriculum, very thoroughly, and takes effective action to improve. The well-written improvement plan is focused on short-term needs, with a clear long-term plan currently being written.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources, specific grants and annual funding very well. The new computer suite has only just become ready for use. Through carrying out comparisons, and agreeing challenging targets for improvement, the school applies the principles of best value well.

There is a generous number of teachers and support staff who are all utilised very well. The spacious, well-kept and attractive accommodation is also put to good use, and the good quality and quantity of many learning resources have a positive affect on pupils' learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The very good leadership of the headteacher.• It is easy to see the headteacher with any queries and he sorts out any problems very quickly.• The good information the school provides about their child's progress.• The high expectations and good teaching that help pupils to make good progress with their learning.• Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few are not happy about the amount of homework.

The inspection team supports all the positive views of parents and judges the amount of homework set to be reasonable.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. There has been a general trend of improvement in the standards attained by pupils in Years 2 and 6 since the last inspection that is broadly in line with the upward trend seen nationally. In relation to their prior attainment, all pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6.
2. The results in the 2001 national tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 6 showed standards to be well below the national average in English and science and below average in mathematics. When these results are compared with similar schools, standards in English and mathematics were above average, and average in science. Further analysis of these results indicates that boys' attainment is lower than girls, by a greater margin than found nationally. However, there was no evidence of this difference during the inspection, due largely to the school's efforts to address this issue. Similarly, there was no apparent significant difference in the attainment of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds, although it was noted that in some classes those from an African heritage were in the higher-attaining groups.
3. The results of the national tests in 2001 taken by pupils at the end of Year 2 were lower than in previous years. Standards were well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers assessed pupils' attainment in science to be also well below average. In comparison with similar schools, results were more favourable with standards below average in reading, writing and science, and average in mathematics. In relation to their prior attainment, these pupils achieved well in most subjects and very well in mathematics. In 2000 and 1999, comparisons with similar schools were a lot more positive, however test results dipped in 2001, due to the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group taking the tests, and a year group where numbers were quite small. The results, therefore, need to be considered with these factors in mind. The unvalidated results for 2002 show that the proportion of pupils gaining the expected levels for their age has improved, because of focused school improvements in teaching and learning. The positive trend has, therefore, resumed. Further analysis of these results indicates that the attainment of boys and girls at the end of Year 2 is generally similar.
4. At the time of the last inspection in 1997, standards at the end of Year 2 were below average in reading and above average in writing, and in Year 6, standards in English were below average. At that time, pupils in Year 6 were judged to make broadly satisfactory progress in speaking, listening and writing, but unsatisfactory progress in reading. Currently, standards in English and literacy are below average at the end of Years 2 and 6, although all pupils have achieved well, and sometimes very well, given their low starting point. This good rate of learning is due to the emphasis placed on language development across the school. At the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils' listening skills are broadly in line with the level expected for their age, as pupils are encouraged to listen and are interested in their work. The speaking skills of almost all pupils, however, are below the expected level. This because there is no separate whole-school policy on the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills, and few formal opportunities for pupils to do so.
5. Standards in reading are below expected standards at the end of Years 2 and 6, however, in relation to their low prior attainment almost all pupils achieve well. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection, especially in Years 3 to 6, when pupils' progress was then judged to be unsatisfactory. The rate of pupils' learning has increased, due to improvements in the provision for reading and the quality of teaching all pupils receive. The teaching of reading has featured strongly in the professional development of all the teachers. This has been closely linked to the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and the use of learning mentors. Pupils' performance is also carefully recorded and monitored, and parents are encouraged to participate through the use of the reading record sheet. The range of fiction books has been greatly increased and teachers are careful to provide appropriate reading books for pupils.

6. Standards in writing at the time of the last inspection were above national expectations in Year 2 and in line with expectations in Year 6. The groups of pupils who sat the national tests in 1997 were higher-attaining groups, when compared to the current year groups. Although standards in writing are now below expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6, the rate of pupils' learning has improved since the last inspection, when it was judged satisfactory, and all pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils' progress is now good, because of the careful analysis undertaken of pupils' performance and the development of strategies to improve upon the noted weaknesses. This has led to the introduction of lessons purely devoted to writing, group targets that are shared with pupils, and the involvement of the co-ordinator for special educational needs in teaching the lower-attaining pupils in Years 1 to 4. This allows her to focus on teaching specific skills to these pupils so that they achieve their best, while class teachers have the opportunity to develop and extend the literacy skills of those who are more able. A particular feature of the school's efforts to improve pupils' learning, is the development of the language games library, from which pupils and parents can borrow activities to play together at home. Pupils also achieve well because all teachers provide an appropriate range of writing activities and opportunities for their pupils, during English lessons, and in other subjects. Handwriting is taught formally, spellings are given regularly as homework, and pupils are encouraged to use dictionaries for words that they do not know.
7. As those pupils in Year 6 who sat the national tests in 1997 were a higher-attaining group, when compared to the current year group, their achievements were higher in mathematics than the achievements of those pupils currently in Year 6. However, pupils now make good progress, as opposed to the satisfactory progress noted in the previous report. Because of this good, and sometimes very good progress, pupils achieve well in relation to their low prior attainment, although overall, attainment is below average. At the end of Year 2, standards are below average, although the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2 has improved since the last inspection, however, few pupils have attained the higher Level 3 in the unvalidated results for 2002. Nearly all pupils have made good progress in relation to their prior attainment, and this is also an improvement upon the previous inspection findings, which judged progress to be satisfactory. The improvement in pupils' learning is due to the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, and, also, the consistently good quality of teaching. Careful and regular assessments allow activities to be carefully prepared for pupils of different ability so that they all achieve their best. This is also coupled with the excellent leadership of the subject.
8. At the last inspection, pupils in Year 6 were achieving standards in science that were close to the national average. The standards achieved by pupils currently in Year 6 are broadly in line with expectations. There is now, however, an increased percentage of pupils reaching both the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5. In relation to their prior attainment, nearly all pupils make good progress. This is an improvement upon the findings of the 1997 inspection when pupils, especially those in Year 6 were found only to have made satisfactory progress. At the time of the last inspection, pupils in Year 2 achieved standards in science that were above the levels expected. The teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in Year 2, in 2002, indicate over 80 per cent of pupils now achieve the expected Level 2 or above, although fewer pupils than are found nationally achieve the higher Level 3. Pupils' good rate of learning is attributed to the consistently good teaching that pupils receive, and improvements to the curriculum and to the co-ordination of the subject.
9. Standards in art and design, history, music and physical education are in line with expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Standards have improved in design and technology since the last inspection and are now in line with expectations, due to better resources, a wider curriculum, and the improved quality of teaching. There has been no significant improvement, since the last inspection, in pupils' achievement in geography at the end of Year 6. This is because, up until two years ago, there was a lack of suitable guidelines to ensure a systematic build up of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, which, together with a lack of careful assessment, has resulted in gaps in pupils' learning and standards that are below expectations for their age. Standards in art and design have improved since the last inspection, as pupils now benefit from a wider range of artistic experiences, but pupils' achievements would be more secure if the teachers followed a detailed programme outlining the specific skills that need to be taught.

10. Standards have remained below the expected level in information and communication technology at the end of Year 6, and have deteriorated from being below expectations at the end of Year 2, at the time of the last inspection, to now being well below expectations. Standards have not improved in this subject because the initiatives needed to improve the provision, as outlined in the last inspection report, have only occurred in the last couple of years. The most significant of these was the funding for a networked computer suite and for staff training, which only became available during the last year. Up until now, stand-alone computers have been used in classrooms to provide all pupils with access to the curriculum. However, due to faulty hardware, in the current Year 2 class, the development of skills for these pupils has been even more restricted, despite them having opportunities to use computers in other classrooms to develop their skills, in areas such as word-processing.
11. Children in the nursery and reception classes make good progress, due to consistently good teaching and well-organised activities that match their needs. This is particularly so in their personal and social development in the nursery, and in language and reading skills and number work in reception. The new guidelines for provision for these young children have been well implemented under the very good direction of the co-ordinator. All children receive good support from the teachers and classroom assistants during lessons, especially in the reception class, where it is consistently very good. All adults in this class have established a very positive atmosphere for learning. As a result of this good provision, the standards achieved by the majority of children, by the time they start Year 1, is in line with the expectations of the Early Learning Goals². As children's attainment on entry to the nursery is well below expectations, and very low in communication, language and literacy, they all achieve at least well, and most achieve very well.
12. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in relation to the targets set for them, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. They are provided with extremely good levels of support from their teachers and the learning support assistants. Pupils' targets are regularly evaluated and reviewed, and new, more challenging targets are set to aid their progress, when required.
13. Standards of achievement for pupils for whom English is an additional language are wide ranging, but all achieve satisfactorily. Some achieve very high standards, for example, a pupil in Year 2 has achieved Level 3 in English, which is much higher than most of the rest of the year group. The pupils newly arrived from abroad are making good progress in learning to speak English, and most appear to have good mathematical ability, although this has not yet been fully assessed. Nearly all pupils have the necessary English skills to take full part in all lessons, but a very small minority do not, and there is no provision for bilingual support for these pupils.
14. There is no formal recording of gifted and talented pupils. However, teachers use their good personal knowledge of their pupils, and the school's very good assessment procedures, to identify, not only the higher-attaining pupils, but also pupils who have specific talents, and they provide appropriately for them. Individual pupils, who show particular aptitude in music or sport, have been encouraged to develop these further, by joining the church choir or club for swimming. This ensures that their needs are met, and that they continue to make or good progress in these areas.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The good attitudes have been maintained since the last inspection and pupils' behaviour, relationships and other aspects of their personal development are all better than at that time. This comes about because of the quality of provision, especially with regard to that supporting pupils' moral and social development. Attendance, though somewhat improved, remains unsatisfactory and there are concerns about disruption to pupils' learning, especially for those who are absent most often.
16. All pupils, from the nursery to Year 6, including those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language come to school eager to learn. They work willingly in lessons and behave well. All pupils show a high degree of thoughtfulness for others' needs and

² The Early Learning Goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary school.

feelings and this contributes to the very good relationships that are usual, both amongst the pupils and between them and staff. Some pupils develop a good level of confidence to express their ideas and to cope with responsibilities.

17. Pupils show a good or better response in around four out of five lessons and in nearly a third of lessons their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils' involvement in their learning is at its best when the activities are calculated to capture and hold their interest. For instance, in one very good science lesson, pupils in Year 3, who had been carefully briefed, examined white carnations that had been allowed to absorb blue dye. They looked very carefully, and with some amazement, to see where the dye had travelled, and this made a notable contribution to their understanding.
18. Children in the nursery and reception classes share the same enthusiasm for learning as older pupils and develop the confidence to become really engrossed in independent activities. They make good progress in developing appropriate behaviour, and in learning to share with others, through the emphasis the school places on developing children's personal, social and emotional skills in the nursery. This enables these children to work hard and concentrate well in the reception class and later years. This was very evident when the children in the reception class, motivated by the skilful presentation of a task by the teacher, were especially keen to learn new words so they could get on with writing individual holiday lists by themselves.
19. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, generally show the same willingness to learn as others, because they get the extra support they need. Pupils with special educational needs pay close attention to adults and they persevere with their tasks. They are very well behaved, they get on well with other pupils and they contribute well to group activities. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language, and have most recently arrived in school are particularly enthusiastic during the small group sessions and show real pride in their achievements.
20. Pupils are still willing to learn, though compliant rather than enthusiastic, when teaching is more mundane. There are very few lessons where attitudes and behaviour become, overall, less than satisfactory. However, occasional small lapses do arise. Usually the teacher quickly notices if a pupil's attention starts to stray and corrects this without any interruption to the flow of the lesson. There are, however, moments when pupils' interest starts to drift because the teacher talks for too long before giving them a chance to get actively involved. Similarly, pupils slip into unnecessary chatter if the work is less stimulating, as was seen in one art lesson, where they had to spend a long time colouring in pictures. A few pupils find it hard to always control their own behaviour, but staff are usually adept at managing them so that there is little interruption to their own or others' learning. Pupils appreciate the rewards they can gain for effort and hard work. They also respond well to the blue ticket system, which is used by the school to encourage punctuality in the morning. There are still a few latecomers but the school finds that this relates to pupils' home circumstances rather than to any unwillingness to attend.
21. Behaviour around the school is also good. Pupils are friendly and polite to each other and to adults. In the playground, good behaviour is helped because pupils enjoy playing with balls and skipping ropes. Incidents of really poor behaviour that lead to exclusions are rare. There are fewer exclusions now than at the time of the last inspection. In the most recent year, there were four short-term exclusions and no permanent ones. African-Caribbean boys tend to be excluded rather more often than other pupils. This relates to the individual characteristics of the very few pupils involved, and does not arise because of any overall differences in the behaviour of different ethnic groups within the school.
22. The very good relationships make a good contribution to learning in all age groups, just as pupils' attitudes and behaviour do. Pupils respect each other's different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and readily work together and help each other when this is part of the lesson. Mutual respect and trust were very evident in one lesson when pupils in Year 6, wearing blindfolds, had to move around, each relying for instructions on another boy or girl designated by the teacher. Younger pupils are occasionally a little unthinking, laughing at others' mistakes, but they are quick to follow the example set by the teachers and become more understanding. Bullying or other harassment seldom arises. Pupils know that such unkindness to others is unacceptable, and that they can ask staff for help if any concerns arise.

23. Pupils recognise the needs of others in the wider community, and, with support from their families, raise considerable funds for charities. Social awareness is also readily apparent in the enthusiasm shown by members of the new school council. Older members are very confident about their role and show good initiative, for instance in helping decide about playground improvements and in gaining funds from a local bank to help pay for them.
24. Attendance has slowly improved since the last inspection in response to the school's many efforts, but remains unsatisfactory overall. Absences are spread across all year groups and ethnic groupings. More than might be expected cluster around weekends; staff are aware that some such absences link to times when pupils visit parents who are separated.
25. In the reporting year ending May 2001, attendance was 91.5 per cent, an improvement from previous years but still well below the average for primary schools. In 2001-2002, it rose again slightly to 91.9 per cent. Some individuals achieve very good attendance, but that of others is more erratic and this creates difficulties because teachers have to make sure they catch up on the work they miss. More than half the pupils in the school have been involved in at least one unauthorised absence during the current school year. Unauthorised absence is much higher now than at the last inspection, but this relates to the care taken now to record such absences correctly. Unauthorised absence is reducing slightly from year to year in response to the school's efforts. Nevertheless, around one in every three absences is still unauthorised at present, either because parents do not provide an excuse or because the one they give is inadequate. For instance, if staff know that a pupil missed school for a shopping trip they correctly record the absence as unauthorised.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. The quality of teaching across the school is good overall. Teaching was at least satisfactory or better in nearly all the lessons seen during the inspection. In 74 per cent of lessons, teaching was good, or better, with 30 per cent of these lessons being very good or excellent. Good teaching takes place in all classes and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in the school is very small. The quality of teaching has improved dramatically since the last inspection, when 30 per cent of lessons were judged as unsatisfactory and the quality of teaching was a significant weakness and a key issue for action. Teaching has improved, due to the very careful monitoring and development it has received from the headteacher and senior management team. Parents at the meeting commented very positively on the level of good teaching in the school.
27. The quality of teaching of children in the nursery and reception classes is good, overall, and this has a considerable impact on children's learning in their first years at school. Teaching in the reception class is invariably very good and sometimes excellent. What makes the teaching so exceptional in the reception class, is how every opportunity is expertly used by staff, not only to engage children in fun and interesting learning in a very relevant manner, but, also, to continually reinforce the development of children's basic skills in numeracy and literacy. In both the reception and nursery classes teaching is based upon very good planning that identifies clear targets in all areas of learning. Classroom organisation is very good and the children have good access to resources, both inside and outside the classroom. Relationships between staff and the children are very good, as is the management of all children, and this fosters the purposeful working atmosphere and the positive developments especially in children's personal and social development. All children display increasing levels of concentration whilst working and when listening to adults. Staff use good assessment procedures to track children's progress and use this information successfully to plan for the next step in children's learning. Support staff are deployed very effectively in lessons and make a positive contribution to children's learning. In the occasional unsatisfactory session observed, inappropriate questions were asked, the focus of the activity was unclear, and the activities themselves unchallenging.
28. Teachers' subject knowledge across the rest of the school is good. Their technical competence in the teaching of basic skills is very good and, consequently, they teach the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies effectively. This showed clearly in a very good numeracy lesson for pupils Year 4 on using division and multiplication in written problems. In this lesson, the teacher's clear expectations and use of subject-specific vocabulary ensured all pupils gained a great deal in their

understanding and use of these two functions. Teachers also display their individual expertise in literacy, science, physical education, as the specialist teacher does in information and communication technology. This is having a positive impact on achievement throughout the school. However, in the lessons seen, class teachers rarely used information and communication technology to support pupils' learning and there were few examples of pupils' work on display.

29. In all year groups, teachers plan well and successfully identify specific learning aims and objectives. These are often shared very effectively with the pupils at the beginning of lessons, and frequently returned to during the course of the lesson, and again at the end of the lesson. This strategy enables pupils to be fully aware of the learning for each lesson, and for teachers to assess pupils' learning. This information is also used well by teachers when setting future targets for individual pupils. Consequently, work is matched well to the needs of pupils of different abilities, especially those who have special educational needs or are lower attaining. The school has made significant improvements to its procedures for assessing pupils' progress in all subjects, but especially in English and mathematics. The use of these procedures is consistent across the school and teachers are effectively using the information collected to plan for the next stages of pupils' learning.
30. Teachers' planning is good; it covers many key aspects of the lesson, such as specific language to be used, questions to be asked, and the deployment of support staff. Planning for subjects, such as literacy and numeracy, is reviewed regularly, and updated during the week, so that future lessons concentrate on the areas where difficulties have arisen.
31. All teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the level of challenge is appropriate in most lessons. In the very best lessons, this challenge is very high and pupils are clearly motivated to learn, as seen in a history lesson in Year 6, when the high quality input from the teacher resulted in pupils making very good progress in their historical understanding of different periods, and particular events and people from these periods.
32. Teaching methods are effective across the school. A strong feature is the use of practical activity to ensure lessons are made interesting to enable effective learning to take place. For instance, in a good design and technology lesson in Year 3, the teacher organised pupils to work in mixed-ability pairs in order to design a drink to the specific requirements of a 'customer'. Similarly, in a very good physical education lesson in Year 6, a very well organised lesson had aspects of individual as well as group work, and whole-class evaluations and demonstrations. This enabled all pupils not only to be fully involved, but also to make good progress. In most instances, teachers use questions well. They often encourage pupils to think and explain their answers. On a few occasions, however, often in an attempt to ensure that the pace of learning does not slow, a few teachers do not give pupils sufficient time to think or articulate their answers. On these occasions, teachers answer for them, thus reducing the impact of this good technique. In all lessons, teachers make frequent and good use of pupils' prior learning. This was very evident in the small group work for pupils for whom English is an additional language, where there was very good revision of initial sounds and nouns, linked well with words in the pupils' first languages. These practices ensured that these pupils were not only very enthusiastic to learn but also made very rapid progress.
33. Teachers manage pupils very well in lessons and their expectations of behaviour are high. Staff have established a very positive rapport with the pupils and this results in a very good atmosphere for learning across the school. All pupils respond positively to this and, as a result, their behaviour in lessons is mostly good or better. It was exceptional in the many activities undertaken in small groups, for example, during sessions taken by the co-ordinator for special educational needs and the learning mentors that focused on pupils' emotions or language development, the very good, warm, and supportive relationships ensured that these pupils made very good progress. Those with emotional difficulties were able to talk about their anger and strategies to control it, while those in the language groups made particular progress on the pronunciation of particular sounds, such as 'h' and 'r'.
34. Teachers use time effectively in most lessons. Occasionally, however, introductions can be over long and the pace of the lessons slows slightly resulting in some pupils becoming disinterested. Teachers use resources, such as whiteboards and practical equipment, effectively, to demonstrate

teaching points and to assist pupils in their understanding of new concepts. An effective example of this good use of resources took place in a good information and communication technology lesson for a group of pupils in Year 6. The teacher provided very good guidance on the use of the search function on the World Wide Web to locate useful information on the Indus Valley civilisation. As a result, these pupils gained a valuable experience and specific skills in this area of their learning.

35. Overall, the quality of marking is good and, as a result, pupils are appropriately informed about their own learning. The setting of individual targets for pupils is currently used well to support pupils' learning in English, but it is not yet used in mathematics or science. In most cases, teachers provide appropriate opportunities for homework and they often use it well to support pupils' learning in class. Arrangements for homework are satisfactory and similar to that seen in many primary schools. There were, however, a few good exceptions. For example, the excellent homework task, required pupils in Year 3 to explain, and if possible, to demonstrate the absorption of coloured dye by white carnations. An adult was then required to sign a letter to say that they had participated in the activity.
36. In the isolated unsatisfactory lesson, there was insufficient challenge in the lesson or focus on the development of specific skills. Consequently, time was not used well, and pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding was less than it could have been and pupils also became restless.
37. The teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The teachers and learning support assistants have a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils; they work closely together and arrange the most suitable range of activities and work for them. Positive relationships are established and help and support are readily provided.
38. The teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language is generally good. The pupils who have recently arrived in school from abroad have time, during some literacy lessons, to learn basic English skills and they make rapid progress during these sessions. The quality of teaching in this small group is very good. Lessons are planned carefully and in great detail with help from the literacy co-ordinator. Activities are very well matched to the pupils' maturity and previous learning as well as to their level of English. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good and encourage the pupils to work hard and make very good progress. Their cultural background is respected and used to enhance learning. For example a teacher has made some word cards in Arabic to match English ones. In most lessons, the tasks are appropriate for pupils for whom English is an additional language and adults do their best to give support, as and when necessary. In other lessons, however, pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English are sometimes left too long without adult intervention.

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

39. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school are good across the school. At the time of the last inspection there were considerable weaknesses in the curriculum. Significant improvements have been made since then and all statutory requirements are now met.
40. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is good. Detailed long-term plans successfully incorporate all the areas of learning that should be taught to children before they enter Year 1. All work is carefully planned using the 'stepping stones' guidelines. Lesson planning is comprehensive and children have access to a very wide range of interesting activities and learning experiences. Teachers and learning support assistants have a secure knowledge of the children in their care, and the curriculum is effectively tailored to meet their needs.
41. Appropriate and relevant policies and schemes of work are now in place for almost all subjects, and they contain suitably detailed and extensive information that should ensure a full coverage of these subjects. At present, however, there is no separate policy for the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Because of this, and a lack of planned opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills, for example, through drama activities, pupils do not develop their spoken language in a systematic way and do not achieve the expected level for their age.

42. The curriculum for pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 is appropriately broad and balanced, and suitable provision is made for most subjects. The plans that exist ensure a steady and progressive development of most subjects through the school, with the exception of information and communication technology. Overall, teachers produce an extensive range of good quality curriculum planning that helps to ensure the steady and effective development of pupils' knowledge and skills. A strength of the curriculum is the development of links between different subjects. For example, in design and technology in Year 4, pupils also enhanced their knowledge of science when they designed and made torches. Planning usually makes most suitable allowance for the various needs of pupils, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, there is still a limited development of appropriate skills in art and design, and a narrow range of work is covered in design and technology in Year 6. Due to the limited provision of computers, and a lack in teachers' knowledge and understanding, the use of computers in other subjects is only just beginning to be adequately developed; for example through study in history lessons of the Indus Valley civilisation.
43. The school has successfully adopted the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Numeracy has been effectively implemented, with an appropriate use of mental activities in lessons and good use of mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum, such as science and design and technology. In literacy, a number of opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their reading and writing skills, both within English itself and across the range of curriculum subjects, such as history and design and technology. The successful implementation of these strategies has contributed towards the progress that pupils are making. However, the lack of a policy and opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills slows the progress that they make in this area of their learning.
44. The school makes good provision for the equality of pupils' access to the whole curriculum, with the staff making sure that all pupils, irrespective of gender, ethnicity or competence in the English language, are involved, as far as possible, in a full range of activities, thus allowing them to achieve as much as they can.
45. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Clear procedures are in place and they closely follow the revised Code of Practice for special educational needs relating to the identification and assessment of pupils. The revised Code has been carefully and effectively implemented. Individual education plans are provided for pupils, and these are of very good quality. They are reviewed each term. Care is taken to ensure that the work provided for pupils is closely suited to their needs. Any pupil who has a statement of special educational needs has this thoroughly reviewed each year.
46. Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory, and improving. Opportunities are provided for the pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English to work in very small groups for a short time each week. Most have the necessary skills in English to play a full part in all lessons, but a small minority do not and there is no provision for bilingual support for these pupils. The school recognises this and is working hard to address the situation.
47. Extra-curricular provision is good, as was found at the time of the last inspection. A good range of sporting activities is offered, for instance, during the summer term a good number of older pupils are involved in athletics after school. Various teams, including football and badminton, compete against other local schools. Other interests are also catered for, for instance in the textiles and chess clubs. A lunchtime club contributes to the personal development of pupils with low self-esteem or who may be lacking in confidence.
48. The school makes good use of links with the community to add to the breadth of pupils' experiences. Pupils benefit from a variety of visits in the local area, for instance to local museums, to learn about the cultural heritage of the area, and visits to Birmingham Symphony Hall to participate in a mass choir. A variety of visitors, including musicians who aid pupils' understanding of the music of a range of cultures, are welcomed to the school, for instance, all pupils enjoyed a day-long visit from an African dancer and drummer that culminated in a performance to the rest of the school. Links with the parish church underpin the religious ethos of the school, and pupils are involved in fund-raising efforts for various charities.

49. Good support is gained from links with local Beacon schools and from the local Catholic Partnership of schools. Links with local Beacon schools have provided influential support for curriculum development and the quality of teaching. The Catholic Partnership of schools is significant in providing a range of opportunities for staff and pupils to meet other schools, especially in sports. There are also positive links with other schools, for instance, a Second World War project, led by a local special school, enabled older pupils to join with pupils with special educational needs to experience the atmosphere and feelings generated on an 'evacuation day'. Suitable links are in place with the secondary schools to which pupils transfer to ensure pupils take advantage of preliminary visits that are offered. However, curricular links with secondary schools are for the most part lacking, because of the large number of schools involved.
50. The overall provision for pupils' personal development is good. The provision for pupils' social and health education is satisfactory. Appropriate attention is given to health and sex education. The health education caravan makes a two-day visit every year, providing a suitable programme for each year group, covering, for instance the dangers of drug abuse. In addition, pupils learn about healthy eating and the benefits of exercise in their physical education and science lessons. Visitors to school also contribute, for instance, by giving a talk about railway safety. A sex education programme is followed and the school intends to develop this further in consultation with parents.
51. Very good provision for pupils' moral and social development is evident, and good provision is made for their spiritual and cultural development. Very significant improvements have been made in these aspects, since the time of the last inspection, especially in the provision for pupils' cultural development.

Spiritual development

52. Assemblies are planned well and most are thoughtfully delivered, with pupils often making a considerable contribution themselves. Pupils are helped to gain knowledge and insight into their own values and beliefs, as well as those of other people and, in particular, they are encouraged to respect and value the opinions of others. Moments of quietness are provided for pupils to reflect on what they have heard and to consider how they should respond themselves. Fewer opportunities are planned for pupils' spiritual development in the subjects of the curriculum, although interesting and thought provoking activities are provided in a few lessons, especially in the nursery and reception classes.

Moral development

53. The headteacher and staff provide good role models and they regularly remind pupils of the correct forms of behaviour and give reasons for them. Discussions often take place in lessons, and rules of conduct are emphasised when necessary. Expectations of pupils' behaviour are high and pupils are regularly praised and rewarded for maintaining these high standards. They are encouraged to develop a clear understanding of right and wrong and to treat staff, visitors and other pupils with courtesy and respect. Pupils also have a high degree of self-discipline and they show great concern should any of them not maintain the expected standards.

Social development

54. Pupils are encouraged to form good relationships with each other, their teachers and other adults. As they progress through the school, pupils are encouraged to work together, to take turns, and to share resources, such as when taking part in experimental work in science, or when working together in music and physical education. Older pupils are particularly caring of younger ones, and they relate well to them during lunchtimes and break times and, in fact, whenever the need arises. Younger pupils in turn are keen to seek out the company of older pupils. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to take on responsibilities within their classrooms, and they carry them out most effectively. Older pupils carry out their particular tasks, such as arranging the hall for assemblies and acting as librarians with great care and efficiency. The social development of pupils is further enhanced by the role of the head boy and head girl. In discussion, pupils in Year 5 described how they aspire to these roles, and understood the qualities they need to exhibit if they are to be elected. The quality of the school's links with the community, the extra-curricular

activities, including the school council, and the involvement of pupils in fund-raising, adds more positive experiences to this well planned development.

Cultural development

55. Pupils are taught about aspects of British culture in subjects, such as English, art and design and history. A most appropriate emphasis is laid on their knowledge and understanding of other cultures during assemblies and during lessons in subjects such as geography and music. The school makes suitable provision for raising pupils' awareness of the multi-cultural society in which they live. Pupils consider some of the different forms of worship, ritual and life-style, celebrate important festivals, such as Diwali, and welcome visitors from other cultures, such as African performers. However, the school does not always adequately celebrate the cultural diversity of its own pupils, and especially of its new arrivals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

56. The procedures for pupils' personal support, in place at the last inspection, have been strengthened and are now very good. They are focused on encouraging pupils to behave well, to work hard and to do their best. Other aspects of pupils' welfare have also improved and are good. Parents are satisfied that their children like school and are happy there. Procedures to assess pupils' academic achievements, together with the use made of the information collected, were unsatisfactory previously, but have improved considerably and are now very good.
57. Good attention is generally given to other aspects of pupils' support and welfare. Staff are alert to care for any pupils who become unwell. Child protection procedures are good. The headteacher ensures that all staff know how they should respond to any emerging issues. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. The headteacher and governors are alert to control any hazards to health and safety, for instance a member of staff greets pupils at the entrance to the playground and ensures that, once they arrive, they remain safely inside. However, arrangements for risk assessment are largely informal. The headteacher recognises that more structured procedures are needed to underpin continued good practice across the range of school activities.
58. Good care is taken to help children settle in when they first join the nursery or reception classes, for instance by carrying out home visits. The school creates a happy community in which pupils from a wide range of backgrounds, and with differing needs, work and play harmoniously together. Pupils who join the school other than at the usual age, including those who transferred into various classes last year from another local school that was closing, and those who arrive from other countries, and who may speak little English, are helped to settle in happily. Both the good support from staff and the friendliness of other pupils contribute to this.
59. The management of behaviour and support for pupils' personal development are very good. The intentions of the behaviour policy, which lays much emphasis on positively promoting good behaviour, are carried out to very good effect. An awards system also makes a full contribution. Pupils earn house points for helpfulness, good efforts, and achievements in their work. Very good attention is given to supporting any pupils with particular behavioural problems. For example, pupils attend small groups to work on anger management and this is very effective. In well-targeted sessions pupils are helped to understand their own feelings and, for instance, learn to contrast how their body feels when they are angry, with what it is like to be relaxed. This enables them to work towards achievable targets for week-by-week improvements in their interactions with others. Bullying or other harassment seldom arises, because pupils know that such behaviour is unacceptable. The headteacher takes a firm stance of 'zero tolerance' regarding the very rare incidents of racial comments. A full range of sanctions, including exclusion, is in place and suitable use is made of them whenever a pupil's behaviour becomes unacceptable.
60. Procedures for monitoring and encouraging attendance are good, as was found during the last inspection. Class and individual awards are used to motivate the pupils. Parents are encouraged to telephone to explain any absence promptly, and a member of the administrative staff rings them if no explanation is forthcoming. Staff are well aware that parents sometimes give diverse family commitments, for instance, the need to take a child to buy new shoes, higher priority than bringing their children to school. Where an explanation of an absence is unacceptable, they are careful to

record it as unauthorised. The educational welfare officer can be contacted by telephone to back up the school's efforts but the parent link worker, previously based in the school and able, at times, to promote attendance, is no longer available. The school's efforts are slowly building parents' awareness of the importance of regular attendance, but the improvement this year is less than the school had hoped and the school needs to redouble its efforts to reinforce this message. A good system is used to encourage punctuality in the morning. Each pupil arriving in the playground on time receives a blue ticket, and these feed into a weekly inter-class award for punctuality. During assembly, the class that has won the award receives the coveted 'Punctuality Bear'.

61. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in nearly all subjects are very good, and they have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. The use made of the information gained from these procedures is also very good. In most subjects, and more often in the core subjects of English, mathematics, and science assessments are undertaken at the end of suitable topics of work, and teachers keep detailed records of pupils' current attainment. This assessment information is used most effectively to ensure that pupils are provided with work that is suited to their particular needs, with pupils regularly being presented with a range of varying activities. However, there are limited procedures in place for the assessment of pupils' attainment in information and communication technology, although there are plans to introduce a skills based assessment procedure. Although in art and design, pupils are assessed at the end of each topic there is a lack of assessed work in pupils' sketchbooks or in a portfolio of evidence that would substantiate this further.
62. The procedures for monitoring pupils' progress through the school, in most subjects, are good. The school possesses considerable evidence about the attainment of pupils, both from its own procedures and through the information provided by the national and optional tests. This information is used carefully to plot the progress that pupils have made. It is also used effectively to set targets for pupils in English, relating to future improvement and the school has plans to extend this good practice to mathematics and science. The school does not, however, use the information to adequately track the progress made by different groups of pupils, in terms of ethnicity or age.
63. Children in the nursery and reception classes are regularly and carefully assessed and this is well recorded against the 'stepping stones' in all six areas of learning for this age group. Assessments are used particularly well in the reception class to plan activities that accurately match the children's needs and provide good challenge.
64. Pupils with special educational needs are regularly assessed and a wide variety of information is recorded to help identify pupils' current attainment. The information gained is used most effectively to provide suitable new work for the pupils. The specific support identified in pupils' individual education plans is more than adequately met because of the high quality support they receive, especially from the special needs co-ordinator and the learning support assistants and mentors. The school has recently made good assessments of the levels of English used by pupils who are not native speakers and careful records are kept of the progress they make. This knowledge is used well to plan appropriate activities for those pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

65. Parents who express a view are generally very appreciative of the work of the school, though the proportion who chose to use the questionnaires given to them before the inspection is relatively low. As was found at the last inspection, they find the school very approachable over any queries or concerns. The school strives to increase their interest and involvement by supplying them with a good flow of information. For instance, pupils' annual reports previously lacked sufficient detail, but are now good.
66. There are good arrangements to involve parents of children in the nursery and reception classes. Parents are made welcome and this ensures a safe and happy transition from home to school each day for the children and also provides a good opportunity for staff and parent to meet. Home visits, prior to children starting school, provide a very valuable link with the children's homes and

ease the initial settling in. Parents are kept very well informed, through regular letters, of what is being taught in the nursery and reception classes and children in the reception class regularly take books home for shared reading. During the inspection, family members of children in reception arrived in very good numbers to see the children's captivating presentation in an assembly of the Noah's Ark story.

67. Parents of older children can also readily meet with teachers to discuss any queries or concerns. They get a friendly welcome, for instance, if they pop into a classroom for a quick word with the teacher at the end of the day. Formal consultation meetings to discuss pupils' progress are offered every term and the headteacher runs a crèche, making it easier for parents to attend these meetings. This has resulted in attendance rising, with parents of around two-thirds of families now coming. Class teachers try to speak at other times to those who do not attend, but there is no formal monitoring to check that some kind of discussion regularly takes place with each pupil's family. Annual reports on pupils' progress have improved and are now good. They give helpful details about what pupils know and the progress they have made, especially in numeracy and literacy, and give some pointers as to the next steps in learning. However, they do not indicate how each pupil's performance compares with national expectations.
68. Good links are in place with parents of pupils with special educational needs, to inform them about their child's needs and about the provision being made for these by the school. For instance, the annual report for these pupils has an additional section with extra details of their progress in relation to the targets on their individual education plans. Parents speak highly of the provision made by the school. There are no special formal arrangements for communicating with parents who might prefer to use a language other than English, but community languages are used in signs around the school. Staff adopt informal methods, using family members who will act as translators, when this is needed.
69. Much useful information is sent to parents. A very clear, helpful summary of work to be done in the various subjects goes home from every class each half term. The newsletters give regular updates about school events and concerns. The prospectus has a range of well-presented information and the governors' annual report to parents is also friendly and helpful in its style. However, the prospectus fails to mention the school's very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The governors' annual report says too little about provision for pupils with special needs and/or a physical disability, and omits the required details of the school's targets for attainment in the national tests taken by pupils in Year 6.
70. Parents generally give satisfactory support for the work of the school. Many help by hearing their children read at home, although a few are unsympathetic to the idea of homework. The amount and type of homework is basically similar to that found in most primary schools. A sizeable minority of parents, especially of younger children, take home numeracy and literacy activities from the weekly games library. Teachers welcome parent-helpers but few come forward. There is no parents' association and the parents' room, which was previously the base for a parent link worker, is now underused. At times, too many parents allow other priorities to outweigh the need to bring their children to school regularly.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

71. The leadership and management of the school are very good and have improved enormously since the last inspection, when they were identified as a key issue for action. The new headteacher's energetic and incisive actions have made a significant impact on the school. Together with the governors and all the staff, the headteacher is heavily committed to raising pupils' achievement and school improvement. The school is also intent not only on providing equality of opportunity, but also offering a high quality of education, where pupils are encouraged to learn and to develop their aspirations. These aims are strongly reflected in the work of the school, and highly valued by parents, as is the commitment of the staff to their children.
72. The headteacher's delegation of management responsibilities is excellent. The deputy headteacher and senior management team use the school's systems for monitoring its work very well, so that they are not only highly effective in their own right, but also add significantly to the drive and direction provided by the headteacher. This ensures that this very strong leadership

team maintains a very clear oversight of each department, and the standards achieved in the school. The co-ordinator for the nursery and reception classes provides extremely strong leadership and is well supported by dedicated and caring staff. These good relationships significantly enhance the good progress made by the children. The literacy co-ordinator has made very good efforts to ensure there is appropriate support for those pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English. She is very aware that teaching these pupils is a new experience for many staff and is keen to get as much support as possible from outside agencies and to improve provision throughout the school.

73. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs, by the special needs co-ordinator, is very good. The revised Code of Practice for special educational needs has been successfully introduced. Pupils are quickly identified, through a variety of procedures, and placed on the special needs register, which the school has chosen to retain. Pupils are provided with individual education plans, which set very clear targets for improvement. These plans are reviewed each term, with new targets being set, if appropriate. The special needs coordinator keeps detailed and extensive records and the progress made by the pupils is carefully checked. The governor appointed to monitor the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs, carries out her work efficiently, effectively and thoughtfully.
74. Governors play a good role in leading the school. Well informed by the headteacher, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and of aspects in need of further development. They are committed to bringing about further improvements to benefit the pupils. The chair of governors, in particular, has a firm grasp of how the school's performance compares with that of others, both similar and nationally. The only statutory requirement not met relates to the need to make sure that the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents fully comply with current requirements.
75. The development of teaching is monitored and evaluated very regularly, and particularly thoroughly. The practices and systems established by the headteacher, and followed by the senior management team, are meticulously maintained and very informative. This, coupled with an equally impressive system for assessing pupils' academic performance, ensures that the school's energy is directed towards the most pressing needs. A significant feature of this is the very high quality involvement of many subject co-ordinators. Their use of whole-school systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects is as thorough as that of the senior management team. It is because of this that standards have been rising and the quality of teaching has improved. This high level of monitoring has identified both individual and whole-school training needs. These developmental needs have received extensive support through a wide range of professional training opportunities. There are even more planned for the year to come and they all link very well to the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. The school's strategy for appraisal and performance management is good, and performance targets are clearly understood by all teaching staff.
76. Since his appointment the headteacher has been working on short term and highly focused objectives; mainly the quality of teaching and the raising of standards, as well as the key issues for action identified in the last inspection report. These objectives have been very well identified in two consecutive improvement plans that are detailed, informative and have been continually reviewed and revised. The priorities have been very appropriate, as have the actions taken to address them. There is a long-term vision for the school aimed at its continued improvement. The translation of these ideas into a formal plan has been begun and there has been a wide review of school improvement so far, and the identification of future priorities. This involved a whole day's activity by staff and governors, although parents and pupils were not fully or formally involved.
77. There are no shortages in staff or accommodation, which was the situation at the last inspection. In fact, both are plentiful and of good quality. There is a very good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. The pupils benefit from a very high ratio of adults to pupils and this is significant in helping all pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, to make good progress. Teachers, learning support staff, and all non-teaching members of staff, make a very valuable contribution to the school's ethos and provide good role models for the pupils, and new teachers and students. High

levels of personal and professional support by designated mentors, and the senior management team ensure that newly qualified teachers and initial teacher trainers are well supported.

78. Learning resources, criticised in the last report, have greatly improved and are now good for all subjects, special educational needs and the nursery and reception classes. The improved quantity and quality of learning resources are used well by staff and are a significant element in the good quality teaching. The school, including the library is well stocked with fiction books, but less so for non-fiction.
79. There is an abundance of accommodation, including spacious classrooms, hall and library. Several rooms are available for special educational needs and other support work and there is a new computer suite. Outside, in addition to good play areas for the Foundation Stage, there are adequate, separate playgrounds for the infants and juniors. Although there is no field suitable for ball games or activities, the site is enhanced by small, grassed areas and numerous trees, which are used in science and environmental work. The site is inaccessible for wheelchair users and unsuitable for those with physical disabilities. The school is generally in a good state of repair and decoration and there is an appropriate programme for refurbishment, such as upgrading the toilets. Satisfactory displays, including pupils' work, enhance the pleasant learning environment, and clearly reflect the Christian ethos of the school.
80. Financial planning continues to be good, as was found at the time of the last inspection. The most recent audit report, received by the school shortly before the inspection, confirms that financial systems are up to standard and provide accurate budgetary information. The headteacher and governors are already addressing various procedural details identified as needing revision or clarification. The present very advantageous budget allows spending to be much higher, in proportion to the number of pupils, than in many other primary schools. Good care is taken to link spending to the developmental priorities of the school, identified in the school improvement plan. High spending on staffing is very well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils benefit from the continuation of some relatively small classes and from the appointment of extra teachers to make specific contributions, such as a specialist computer teacher and highly qualified and experienced learning mentors. Similarly, the special educational needs co-ordinator can concentrate fully on her role because she does not have a class responsibility, and this contributes to the very good progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Expenditure on resources for learning is also carefully thought out. Previous inadequacies have been tackled by high, well considered spending so that resources are now good overall. They are usually employed to good effect. However, the computer suite only came into use just before this inspection and its potential to build the knowledge and skills of all pupils is yet to be fully exploited. The use of computers for financial administration is good as its use for compiling assessment data. However, in-depth analysis of this data with regard to the achievements of particular ethnic groups of pupils, to underpin further refinements to the present good provision for them, are still to be developed. Any extra grants, such as the one obtained for improvements to the play area for the nursery and reception classes, are fully spent for their intended purpose.
81. A high budget surplus of around 15 per cent has been built up in recent years, a wise response to the need to cushion considerable fluctuations in pupil numbers likely during the major redevelopment of the local area. Governors have recently reduced their admission limit from 45 to 30, so the potential for year-to-year variation in intake is much reduced. Consequently, they have now been able to develop a three-year plan that outlines how the surplus will be reduced to a more reasonable level by expenditure on premises and the curriculum.
82. The school applies the principle of best value to good effect. Governors compare pupils' performance with what happens in other local schools and nationally, and agree challenging targets for improvement. By joining the staff for a training day, which focused on considering priorities for inclusion in the school development plan, they are able to understand and take account of co-ordinators' views about development needs. A mechanism is now in place, through the new school council, for taking account of pupils' ideas, about improvements that they would like to see. The headteacher is always open to parents' ideas and consults informally with them, for instance, to find their views on the new arrangements recently tried out for parents' evenings. At present though, there is no regular routine for considering parents' views of the school, finding what they like, and seeing if they have any preferences regarding possible changes and

developments. The governors give proper consideration of alternative quotations, where this is appropriate, for instance, when engaging a firm to build the new wall and fence that have replaced the previous hazardous bank between the two playgrounds. They consider whether the expected benefits are gained from their spending decisions, for instance they recognise that the decision to buy in expert financial advice, so that up to date budgetary information is readily available, has allowed the headteacher to concentrate his energies on the priorities of teaching, learning, and curriculum development.

83. The funding allocated to the school is much higher than that given to many other primary schools. This very advantageous funding is spent to very good effect to build up increasingly good provision for pupils' learning, ensuring that the school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

84. To improve the quality of education further the headteacher, governors, and staff should*:

- θ Raise standards in information and communication technology throughout the school by:
 - providing regular access to computers in the classroom and the suite;
 - developing a programme of work and an assessment scheme that ensures the progressive development of pupils' skills;
 - providing opportunities for pupils to use their computer skills and knowledge in a wider range of subjects;
 - increasing staff confidence and expertise in the teaching and use of information and communication technology.
(Paragraphs 10, 28, 42, 61, 112, 122, 125, 131, 137, 144, 148 - 153 and 159)
- θ Take further measures to encourage parents to work with the school to improve attendance so that their child's attainment and progress is not undermined.
(Paragraphs 15, 24, 25, 41, 60 and 70)
- θ Use current assessment procedures to track the progress of different groups of pupils and take appropriate action so that achievement of these pupils can be maximised.
(Paragraphs 62, 113, 121 and 126).
- θ Provide a range of planned opportunities in which pupils can further develop their speaking skills. (Paragraphs 4, 108 and 113)

The following issues should also be considered by the school for inclusion in the action plan:

- ® ensure that the statutory requirements in respect of the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are fully met. (Paragraph 69)
- ® develop pupils' artistic skills more fully, as they move through the school.
(Paragraphs 42, 61, and 127-131)

* All these areas have already been identified by the school and feature in their long-term plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

53

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	12	23	11	3	0	0
Percentage	4	27	43	21	5	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	17	176
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	-	103

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	48

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35*
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

* The school's intake of pupils who joined other than at the usual time of first admission was much higher than normal due to the closure of a local school.

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.9
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	8	10	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
	Total	14	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	78 (67)	72 (67)	78 (86)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Total	13	13	6
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72 (62)	72 (81)	78 (67)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. As there were 10 or fewer boys and/or girls in the year group, the table omits the individual totals of the number of boys and girls who achieved Level 2 or above.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	9	12	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
	Total	12	13	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	57 (54)	62 (75)	76 (75)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Total	12	10	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	57 (43)	48 (57)	71 (57)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. As there were 10 or fewer boys in the year group, the table omits the individual totals of the number of boys and girls who achieved Level 4 or above.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	52
Black – African heritage	6
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	54
Any other minority ethnic group	32

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y R – Y 6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.3
Average class size	25.3

Education support staff: Y R – Y 6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	145.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	3	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	633,152
Total expenditure	593,359
Expenditure per pupil	3,091
Balance brought forward from previous year	57,224
Balance carried forward to next year	97,017

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	193
Number of questionnaires returned	38
Percentage of questionnaires returned	20

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	42	3	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	59	34	5	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	45	0	5	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	53	11	5	5
The teaching is good.	66	29	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	55	37	5	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	26	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	29	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	45	45	5	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	58	29	0	0	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	34	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	42	5	0	8

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE³

85. The nursery and reception classes form the Foundation Stage. There are, currently, 17 children in the nursery and 30 in the reception class, of whom only 13 transferred from the school's nursery, with the remainder coming from one of the other local nursery schools. Both the nursery and reception classes are well staffed, each having one full-time teacher and one full-time nursery nurse or classroom assistant. The school's special educational support staff and learning mentors also give appropriate help and support as necessary.
86. Since the last inspection, the Foundation Stage has replaced the Early Years curriculum nationally for children in the nursery and reception and the school has worked very hard over the last two years to ensure that this change has been implemented effectively.
87. Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. The nursery is spacious for the number of children involved, but the reception area is just adequate for 30 children. However, good use is made of other areas within the school for smaller groups of children. The nursery and reception classes also use the two outdoor play areas very well, one of which is hard-surfaced and the other which has a very good climbing equipment, an area structured for role-play and a lawn. As yet, there is no covered area for outdoor play in wet weather. Children in the nursery and reception classes are provided with a wide range of practical activities in all the six areas of learning for children of this age.
88. Transition from home to school is carefully planned to reduce the stress for both children and parents and this includes home visits by staff from both the nursery and reception. The school's arrangements for children's transition from the reception class to Year 1 are satisfactory.
89. Children enter the nursery with attainment overall that is well below that expected for their age, although there is a wide spread of ability. Most of the children have poor speaking and listening skills, resulting in limited concentration. Many have had little experience of using books and their knowledge and understanding of the world is well below that of many children of their age. Although most children have appropriate physical skills to run and climb with confidence, many are unable to use scissors or handle other small equipment as expected. The children's personal and social skills, such as self-confidence, sharing, and behaving in an accepted way, vary greatly, but, overall, are well below that expected when they join the nursery. By the time they leave the reception class, most of the children have made good or very good progress and reach the Early Learning Goals expected in all areas. Children who have special educational needs receive good support and also make good progress. Most children arrive at school on time and parents are confident that their children are happy and cared for well.
90. This inspection, judges and reports on only the quality of teaching undertaken by qualified teachers, although it is acknowledged that the other staff make very valuable contributions to the high quality of the teaching. The quality of teaching is good overall, but the lessons seen ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory. The key strengths of the teaching in the nursery and reception classes are:
- the teachers' knowledge and planning of the Foundation Stage curriculum, ensuring children experience a wide range of activities in all six areas of learning;
 - good management of, and relationships with the children;
 - good team work amongst the adults;
 - effective assessment and monitoring of children's progress;
 - well organised classrooms, with plenty of practical learning activities attractively laid out;
 - exciting and motivating group activities, particularly in the reception class, that enable the children to concentrate and learn well.

³ The Foundation Stage relates to children from the age of three to the end of the reception year.

91. There were no overall weaknesses, but, where teaching was unsatisfactory, this was mainly due to the way in which the teacher used the well-planned activities. Children were insufficiently challenged by the lack of specific questions to make them think and extend their learning. For instance, a child, who could easily count to 10 and beyond, spent considerable time counting objects to four or five.
92. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator provides extremely strong leadership and is well supported by dedicated and caring staff. These good relationships significantly enhance the good progress made by the children. As a member of the senior management team, the co-ordinator also ensures that the Foundation Stage is appropriately recognised and given appropriate priority in whole-school issues and planning.

Personal, social and emotional development

93. When children enter the nursery class their personal and social skills are wide ranging, but are well below those expected for their age overall. All the children make good, and many very good, progress, so that, by the time they leave reception, they have achieved the standards expected for this age group. Children in nursery are helped to feel safe and secure, showing a high level of trust in the staff, and confidently follow well-established routines. This was evident in the way in which a very young child, with very little understanding of English, was welcomed into nursery. The teacher had learned a greeting in the child's home language that clearly reassured both the child and her grandfather and she soon confidently engaged herself in one of the practical activities.
94. In the reception class, children respond responsibly and quickly when asked to clear away activities, which, as yet, they do not do very well in nursery. In reception, children also show good levels of concentration, whereas several children in nursery, when not interacting with an adult, find it very difficult to spend more than a few minutes on any activity. Some children in nursery need help to behave in an accepted way, such as not charging around in a boisterous manner, and staff show skill and understanding in helping them to do this. They ensure that the children are clear about what is expected of them throughout the sessions.
95. Children in the reception class are eager to respond to the adults and learn to behave in a mature manner when working independently and in small groups. All the children of whatever ability can carry out a task for ten to 15 minutes, without the direct supervision of an adult, for example, when making models from 'junk' material and mathematical shapes from construction kits. In whole-group sessions, such as story-time, several children in the nursery find it difficult to sustain concentration and, occasionally, get restless and silly, particularly if the teacher does not specifically engage them through careful questioning and involvement. By contrast, the children in the reception class really enjoy whole-class sessions and are eager to participate and co-operate. They show mature attitudes when listening to each other and their teachers as was seen during an exceptionally good class assembly, attended by many parents.

Communication, language and literacy

Speaking and listening

96. Children make good progress in the development of their speaking and listening skills, many from a level well below that expected when they started in nursery. By the time they leave the reception class, at least half will achieve the standards expected for their age. Most staff are skilled at using well-phrased questions to help the children listen carefully and respond with more than 'yes' or 'no' answers, but one or two staff did not demonstrate the use of more specific questions in order to make children think and apply what they already know. When the adults use good questioning it, encourages the children to explain what they have been doing and to describe what they see, but opportunities to do this are frequently missed, particularly in the nursery. For example, when a story was read about 'Noah's Ark', it was rushed and children were not given the chance to describe the pictures, to share understanding of key words, or asked to recall what had happened.
97. Stimulating opportunities throughout the year are provided in both the nursery and reception classes for children to use language creatively in role-play activities. Currently, the nursery has a

'picnic' area and the reception class houses a 'travel agency'. Children in both classes enjoy these imaginary situations and get involved in conversation with each other and adults as they act out various characters. From time to time, there is good interaction from adults, which encourages the children to use wider vocabulary and describe what is happening.

98. Older children are encouraged to speak clearly and effectively and a good number of those in the reception class show exceptional confidence in speaking to a large audience, including parents. Their performance is above expectations for their age.

Reading

99. Many children start in the nursery with little experience of books. They make very good progress and most leave the reception class having achieved the standard expected for their age. This is achieved through opportunities being provided for children to share and enjoy books with adults and to sit and 'read' on their own. In reception, children take books home on a regular basis and parents are encouraged to share the book with their child and write comments about how much interest the child has shown. Most children in the reception class have a good grasp of initial sounds and recognise a number of familiar words. At this stage in the year, the children in reception are being very well prepared for the literacy lessons in Year 1. Using a new large book each week, the teacher very effectively helps the children learn strategies to help them as readers. Children understand what a title is and also understand what the author and illustrator do. In response to the teacher asking, '*What do we use to help us to read?*' the children eagerly responded with '*pictures*', '*letters*', '*words*'. Further very good questioning, such as '*Which part of the word is important?*' challenged, and extended their thinking and use of important strategies. In group-reading sessions with the teacher, these strategies are effectively reinforced and the children are helped to read with expression and to re-read sentences in order to understand their meaning. A good range of books, both fiction and non-fiction, is available and children are taught to use these well.

Writing

100. Good opportunities are provided for the development of children's writing. In the nursery, children have access to a range of writing and drawing materials and are encouraged to make marks and form shapes to prepare them for writing. Writing for a particular purpose, and in an appropriate style, is very well developed in the reception class and many of the children reach the standard expected for their age. A particularly good example of this was seen, following the reading together by the teacher and children of the large text. The teacher then very skilfully questioned the children who realised they needed to make a list of items to take on holiday. During the following practical work, the higher-attaining children enthusiastically wrote lists of what they needed to take. They showed a good knowledge of sounds, especially initial ones, and were confident to have a go at difficult words. Simple words, such as '*sun*', were spelt correctly and very good attempts were made at more difficult words such as '*lowshun*' (*lotion*). The children with slightly less ability enjoyed writing postcards with help from an adult. They were encouraged to use word cards to ensure the correct spelling of familiar words and enjoyed the discussion with the adult who helped them be creative in what they were telling their relative or friend.

Mathematical development

101. Children enter the nursery with standards well below those expected for their age, however, by the time they start Year 1, many have achieved the expected goals in this area of learning and all have made at least good progress. Most children join the nursery not recognising any numerals and only a few count accurately beyond five. A few of the higher-attaining children have already exceeded the goals expected at the end of the reception year and have moved on to working on aspects of the National Curriculum. For example, though a well-planned activity and very focused, challenging questioning by the teacher, the higher-attaining children mentally added the price of two or three articles, up to a total of 20 pence and correctly gave change from a 20 pence coin. Children with the least mathematical ability recognise and count confidently to five and understand the meaning of five pence in monetary terms. A few still can only convert this to five one-pence coins, whilst others confidently select two two-pence coins, plus a one-penny coin. In whole-class sessions, children in the reception class enjoy the challenge of counting in tens to 100. Most

children confidently do this forwards, and several achieve it backwards. In the nursery, satisfactory opportunities are provided for the children to sort and match, using jigsaws and other appropriate toys. They also learn to count and recognise simple shapes. However, intervention from adults, during both planned and incidental activities, does not consistently reinforce mathematical learning, resulting in wasted time and missed learning opportunities. This was very evident in a group mathematical activity in which the emphasis was put, inappropriately for four year-olds, on playing the game fairly rather than developing their counting skills.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

102. Many of the children join the nursery with very limited experiences of the world around them and have standards in this area of learning that are well below expectations for their age overall. During their time in nursery, all the children make good gains in their knowledge and understanding, through the provision of a wide range of experiences. These include visits, for example, from fire fighters, or simple scientific observations, such as seeing how bread changes when it is toasted, or the planting and nurturing of seeds. Children are given access to a range of information and communication technology equipment, such as a computer, electric typewriter and controllable 'Roamer'. There are further good opportunities for children in the reception class build on and extend their knowledge and understanding, so that, by the time they move to Year 1, they achieve most of the goals expected for their age. These opportunities prepare the children very well for subjects in the National Curriculum. Construction and role-play areas are used purposefully to re-enact experiences, such as holidays and picnics. Assemblies and prayer times support the development of children's awareness of Christian beliefs. Other cultures and beliefs are fostered through special celebrations, such as the Hindu festival of Diwali.

Physical development

103. Many of the children enter the nursery with appropriate physical skills, especially in their ability to run, jump and climb. Through their time in reception they make good progress and they move into Year 1 having reached or exceeded the standard expected for their age. They throw small objects with the skill and accuracy expected for their age and show appropriate awareness of themselves in space and they climb, roll and balance with confidence and good control. Good teaching helps the children in the reception class understand the need for safety when using gymnastic apparatus in the hall. However, there is limited opportunity in formal physical education lessons for children to develop their initiative and independence. In these lessons, children are helped to observe how others perform and are beginning to make helpful comments. Children who are unable to participate, for example, one child had a broken arm, are insufficiently involved in these valuable parts of the lessons. The children can undress and dress themselves independently for activities in the hall, such as dance and gymnastics, and require very little help from adults. In the nursery and reception classes, children are provided with satisfactory opportunities to use scissors and small tools, such as those for modelling dough. They use these safely and hold pencils correctly.

Creative development

104. Overall, the children make good progress in this area of the curriculum so that, by the end of the reception year, they reach the standard expected in most areas. In some aspects the children make very good progress, but in both the nursery and reception classes insufficient opportunities are provided for children to explore and create using a range of fabrics and textiles. In the nursery, children explore colour through using crayons, paints and coloured filters, begin to appreciate how secondary colours can be made from mixing primary colours and that, by adding white, colours can be made paler. In the reception class the children's awareness of colour and shading is extended in many ways, including looking at the beautiful stained-glass windows in the local church, and by using pastel crayons. Children's musical development is encouraged in a variety of ways. Children listen and respond to music through dance; the children in reception dancing to Indian music as well as more traditional rhythms. All the children enjoy listening to and joining in with familiar rhymes and songs and in the reception class the children sang very tunefully and enthusiastically to the whole school during their class assembly. The children show satisfactory levels of imagination in role-play situations.

105. Overall, children in the nursery and reception classes receive a well-balanced education, which gives them a very good start to their school life and prepares them well for Year 1 and the work of the National Curriculum.

ENGLISH

106. In the national tests in 2001, the school's results were well below average at the end of Years 2 and 6. They are far more positive when compared with similar schools. Any weaknesses in the pupils' performances have been analysed, and are now being addressed carefully. Standards at end of Years 2 and 6 are now broadly in line with those expected in listening, and below average in speaking, reading and writing. Taking into account their prior attainment, however, pupils are making good progress, and this is an improvement upon the previous inspection when progress was judged as satisfactory at best.
107. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make good gains in their knowledge and skills. For pupils with special educational needs specific and challenging targets are set and regularly reviewed by class teachers and special needs teachers and assistants. They are used well in class lessons, and particularly well in small group sessions. The exemplary teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language, in small groups, ensures that they always make at least good gains in their learning during these sessions.
108. At the end of Year 2, pupils' listening skills are broadly in line with expectations, whilst their speaking skills are below expectations. A lack of a school policy and insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills undermines the development of this skill. Pupils usually listen attentively to their teachers, and most show an understanding of what they have heard. A minority of pupils speak clearly and confidently, and a small number feel able to provide extended answers and comments. Almost all pupils, however, speak either in single words or in short phrases, often lacking the confidence to express themselves at length. At the end of Year 6, pupils' listening skills are also in line with expectations for their age, whilst their speaking skills are below the standard expected. A significant minority of pupils produce answers and observations, confidently and concisely. The majority of pupils, however, are not keen to speak at any length in front of their classmates, and, when asked to do so, they often find difficulty expressing themselves clearly.
109. At the end of Year 2, standards in reading are below those expected. A significant minority of pupils read their texts accurately, introducing some expression into their reading, and confidently explaining what they have read. The majority of pupils read their books successfully, but with little expression or fluency. Most have appropriate phonic skills that enable them to attempt to read words that they do not know. Some of these pupils, however, have limited word comprehension, so that, even when they read a portion of text correctly, they are unable to explain clearly the meaning of what they have read. At the end of Year 6, pupils' reading skills, overall, are below the level expected. Whilst some pupils read fluently and accurately, with a number producing good expression, most pupils lack fluency and few use intonation when they read aloud. In talking about what they have read, most pupils make appropriate reference to characters and events in the story. Higher-attaining pupils are confident in finding information using reference books, and some have successfully mastered the skills of skimming and scanning the text to find information quickly. Many others find these skills difficult.
110. At the end of Year 2, pupils' standards in writing are below expectations. Pupils successfully write portions of text, including stories, news and poems. A significant number of pupils, however, lack confidence in using capital letters and full stops consistently, correctly and independently, to add structure to their writing. The writing of higher-attaining pupils is often thoughtful, with some interesting and imaginative vocabulary introduced. Other pupils find it difficult to write at length, especially in relation to adding interest and detail. Many pupils spell their words correctly, whilst others are usually successful in producing spellings that are phonetically acceptable. The handwriting skills of many pupils are appropriately developed, with higher-attaining pupils joining their letters successfully. Most other pupils produce letters that are well formed, and of a consistent size, although a minority of pupils find this aspect of work difficult. At the end of Year 6, the standard of pupils' writing is below average. The majority of pupils write factual information

successfully, but show less confidence in producing imaginative writing, in the form of stories and poems. These pupils have difficulties producing extended pieces of writing, often lacking the knowledge of punctuation, or of adventurous vocabulary, to produce interest and depth in their work. Higher-attaining pupils join their letters in a clear and neat handwriting style, although a number of pupils do not maintain this quality of handwriting when writing in other subjects. The standards of pupils' spelling is generally satisfactory, and those who find it difficult use dictionaries to help them improve their work.

111. The quality of teaching and learning is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection as this time no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are carefully planned and well organised, with teachers following the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy. Teachers also provide time for pupils to undertake extra work in writing, which the school has identified as an area of weakness. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to listen to stories and various forms of instruction, and they make good use of intonation in their voices, as well as humour, to help maintain pupils' interest. On occasions, pupils are also encouraged to speak, through well-directed questions. In most lessons, however, teachers do not provide pupils with enough chances to speak, and opportunities are missed to address these weaknesses. Teachers are careful to provide appropriate reading books for pupils, and nearly all pupils have books suitable to their needs. Careful records are kept of the books read, and pupils are regularly provided with new ones. Pupils are generally keen to read and, even when they find reading difficult, they are prepared to 'have a go'.
112. Teachers provide an appropriate range of writing activities and opportunities for their pupils, during lessons in English. Opportunities are also provided, on occasions, for pupils to further develop their writing skills in other subjects of the curriculum, such as history. Their extended writing about Victorian Britain, and the lives of children then were both interesting and detailed. Pupils respond appropriately to the opportunities provided, in all aspects of the subject. Good relationships are developed between teachers and pupils, and teachers provide appropriate support during lessons, as well as adding most helpful comments to pupils' work in their exercise books. Good use is also made of learning support assistants, who contribute well to the progress that the pupils make. Pupils' attitudes to English are consistently good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. They behave well and set about their various tasks with good concentration. They work well on their own, and in groups when required, and most persevere with the work set. They generally know what to do, but readily turn to adults if necessary.
113. The co-ordination of the subject is very good. The school effectively uses the National Literacy Strategy as its scheme of work and nearly all the various aspects of English are now suitably covered, with the exception of the development of speaking. The two co-ordinators are hard working and well informed, and in studying the results achieved by pupils, they have identified the weaknesses in pupils' work. The strategies that have been implemented have helped to raise standards significantly. The co-ordinators monitor the work in the classroom, to see for themselves the standards being achieved. They are fully aware that boys often do not perform as well as girls, and the school is attempting to address this issue, through providing more books and writing topics that are likely to appeal to boys. A very good, and very much improved, range of assessment procedures is in place, and most relevant information is recorded to identify pupils' current attainment. This information is used very well to track the progress that pupils are making, and to help provide targets for further improvement, but not always to adequately track the achievement of different groups of pupils, such as those of different ethnic groups. Resources are good, and the overall provision, including that for the library, has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection, except in relation to non-fiction books. Limited use is currently made of information and communication technology, with, for example, little word-processing taking place to produce samples of writing.

MATHEMATICS

114. At the time of the last inspection, standards in mathematics were in line with the national average at the end of Years 2 and 6. In relation to their lower prior attainment pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 achieve well. However, standards in mathematics and numeracy are below national expectations for their age. All pupils make good progress. The effective implementation of the

National Numeracy Strategy coupled with the rigorous monitoring and development of teaching account for this achievement.

115. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by class teachers and support assistants and make good progress. Many have targets that relate to specific mathematical skills. These are regularly reviewed and updated so that they are both relevant and challenging. Most pupils for whom English is an additional language are also supported well and make good progress as teachers usually emphasise mathematical language in their work and provide practical equipment to demonstrate concepts such as division. This also helps those pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. However, on a few occasions these pupils are not suitably supported in lessons. There are no bi-lingual support staff and, on a few occasions, these pupils are left to work by themselves rather than to participate in activities that would stimulate their English language development.
116. By the end of Year 6, nearly all pupils are confident with many aspects of number. Higher-attaining pupils order negative and positive numbers. Most have investigated the properties of prime numbers and through a mathematical investigation called 'Show Me', the higher-attaining pupils convert whole numbers to decimals. The large number of lower-attaining pupils are working with simple fractions of halves, quarters and eighths. Most pupils are reasonably accurate in their written calculations; higher-attaining pupils consistently so. The speed of mental calculations and range of strategies used by most pupils is reasonable, although some have difficulty in explaining them and require apparatus to do so. All pupils apply their knowledge appropriately in a wide range of problems, relevant to their ability, that involve money or units of measurement. All pupils are conversant with the basic properties of sides and angles of regular and irregular shapes and, for many, their understanding of rotational symmetry is quite good. Most pupils have plotted line graphs to demonstrate the conversion between centigrade and Fahrenheit, and have a simple understanding of mode, mean and median. The significant number of lower-attaining pupils works on similar concepts, but their practice is far less secure.
117. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are not fully competent or confident in all four rules of number. The few higher-attaining pupils are confident with addition and subtractions and, although most of the lower-attaining pupils accurately subtract two digit numbers, many continue to struggle with numbers to 20. Many pupils, especially the higher-attaining pupils, know that there is often more than one strategy to solve a problem. Most pupils know their two, and five times tables reasonably accurately, but cannot recall these facts at speed. They understand that division is about sharing, although many require apparatus to successfully complete their work in this area. Most pupils identify number patterns and sequences, such as those created by adding or taking away ten from a number and most lower-attaining pupils are confident in ordering numbers to 100. Pupils name the common two- and three-dimensional shapes and use floor shapes to make mosaic patterns and mathematical construction sets to make three-dimensional shapes, such as dodecahedrons. In science, there is regular evidence of pupils collecting data and representing it on bar graphs.
118. Overall, the quality of teaching is good; and at times, it is very good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when the teaching seen was satisfactory, with an element of unsatisfactory lessons observed. Currently, in nearly all instances, teachers have at least a good knowledge of the subject and how to teach it. They adhere well to the three parts of the numeracy hour. The speed and accuracy of pupils' mental calculations are continually encouraged through lively and challenging starts to each lesson. In these parts of the lessons, the continual reinforcement of the basic skills is good. In the very best of lessons, this is linked in very well to the main part of the lesson. In these lessons, good use is made of pupils' prior learning, relating it to the task, thus building and continually extending pupils' knowledge and understanding.
119. Small class sizes enable teachers to know their pupils well, and they use this advantage to good effect anticipating possible difficulties and preparing the next step pupils need to take in their learning. Because of this, teachers make continued references to the language of mathematics in an attempt to improve pupils' mathematical vocabulary. Day-to-day assessment is good and teachers use this well to match work to pupils of different abilities. They also use this information competently to target all pupils with appropriately challenging questions that encourages them to think, and explain their work, especially at the end of the lesson. In a few lessons, however, pupils

were not always provided with sufficient time to think about the answer they wanted to give before the teacher moved on, thus limiting the impact of this good strategy.

120. All teachers use a wide range of activities that support the learning intention of the lesson. These intentions are not only challenging, but also demonstrate teachers' high expectations. Resources are good, and they are used well to interest pupils in their learning and reinforce their learning. At times, the excellent use of additional staff ensures that lessons meet the needs of all pupils. At every stage of a lesson seen in Year 4, support staff were very active in encouraging pupils' participation and development. It is due to this, along with teachers' good organisational skills, that time is often well used, the transition between activities in a few classes being relatively seamless. Relationships in lessons are very good, and this develops a good climate for learning. Homework is regularly set and is used well to reinforce class-based learning.
121. The co-ordination of the subject is excellent. The mathematics co-ordinator has an in-depth knowledge of the subject and how it should be taught. She has used this to very good effect in the monitoring of teaching, providing very good direction and support in the improvement in the quality of teaching. Assessment procedures are very comprehensive. The use of data to inform developments in relation to teaching, the curriculum, and to predict pupils' future achievement, is well developed. For example, the exhaustive analysis of both optional and national tests has indicated weaknesses in the reading, understanding and solving mathematical problems. This has been a strong feature of the teaching of mathematics this year, as evidenced in the analysis of pupils' previous work and is, in part, why standards have risen yet again in the tests in 2002 taken by pupils in Year 2. As yet, however, assessment data is not used to inform the setting of individual or group targets for pupils, or to track different groups of pupils to maximise their achievement.
122. Numeracy skills are developed appropriately across the curriculum. Particularly good use is made of pupils' data-handling experiences in science, and design and technology. For example, pupils in Year 2 measured the ingredients for the making of their 'Gingerbread Men'. However, there is little use of information and communication technology either in the teaching of mathematics or to support pupils' development of their numeracy skills.

SCIENCE

123. At the time of the last inspection, the standards achieved by pupils in Year 2 were above the expected level for their age. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in 2002 confirm the inspection findings, with over 80 per cent of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 or above. At the last inspection, pupils in Year 6 achieved standards that were close to the national average. This inspection found that standards achieved by the pupils currently in Year 6 are also broadly in line with the national average, but with an increased percentage of pupils reaching both the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5. Overall, this shows that all pupils, including those with special educational need make good progress, which is largely due to careful planning and consistently good teaching. Most pupils for whom English is an additional language have adequate English to enable them to make good progress without support. The few who are at an early stage of learning to speak English make satisfactory progress in their practical work, but are insufficiently supported in their written work and in their development of specific scientific vocabulary.
124. From Year 1, pupils begin to develop good scientific skills and understanding through carefully planned activities. These help pupils make judgements about what they already know, carry out fair tests, record in a variety of ways, and make appropriate evaluations. Pupils in Year 2 have a sound knowledge and understanding about areas, such as electricity, forces and plant life. In a Year 2 lesson, for instance, pupils learnt to classify fruits and vegetables by cutting open a good number of them to look for the seeds. They were fascinated to discover that tomatoes and peppers are really fruits. This pattern of making reasoned predictions about what might happen, carrying out practical work to see what actually happens, then recording and explaining results, is consistently developed throughout the school. By Year 6, pupils are also able to decide what they want to find out and to plan their own simple experiments to test out their ideas. Working in small groups, pupils in Year 6 found out for themselves how changing the wire in a circuit alters the

brightness of a bulb or the speed of a motor. However, they did not rigorously apply their sound knowledge of only changing one variable when carrying out an experiment.

125. The quality of teaching is consistently good, and occasionally very good, accounting for the good progress pupils make. This shows a significant improvement since the last inspection. As well as the careful planning based on good subject knowledge, teachers are confident and skilled at asking searching questions, which make pupils, think, and apply what they already know and explain what they have discovered. It is evident in these questions the continual challenge that teachers provide for their pupils. Many practical activities are planned in lessons, and pupils enjoy this and work enthusiastically because of it. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to work with each other, which they mostly do sensibly and productively. In Year 4, for example, pupils working in pairs carefully constructed simple electric circuits and the teacher skilfully reinforced this knowledge and understanding in designing a torch in design and technology lessons. Teachers also recognise the importance of reinforcing literacy and numeracy skills. They create opportunities for the pupils to use a wide range of writing styles to record their work, such as lists, charts, descriptions, diagrams and labelling. Mathematical tables and graphs, together with correct scientific vocabulary, are used appropriately, but there is insufficient use of computers to record work, present results or for research. Homework is used regularly, sometimes to very good effect, to support pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Years 2 were sent home, eager to challenge their parents' knowledge in deciding whether a banana was a fruit or a vegetable, and pupils in Year 3 took home a letter, which asked an older person to let them show and explain how a plant absorbs water. The letter was then brought back to school signed by the adult as proof that the pupil had successfully carried out the task.
126. The co-ordination of the subject is very good and includes the systematic monitoring of teaching and analysis of test results, which are again significant improvements upon the findings of the last inspection and important in maintaining pupils' good rate of progress. The assessment of pupils' progress is regular and used well by teachers to ensure pupils' good progress continues. Although the school has analysed results in terms of girls and boys, the analysis of achievement by different ethnic groups has been limited. The setting of individual targets is just beginning, but the school has already identified this as an area for development. Good planning ensures that, year-by-year, topics cover all areas of the National Curriculum, and are taught systematically so that pupils' knowledge and understanding are built up carefully. For example, each year pupils learn about an aspect of healthy living as part of their health education programme. Since the last inspection, improvements in learning resources have encouraged more practical work, which has contributed to pupils' good progress, and the involvement of all pupils in all activities.

ART AND DESIGN

127. Standards in art and design at end of Years 2 and 6 are broadly in line with expectations, and all pupils make reasonable progress. Standards at the end of Year 6 have improved since the last inspection, when they were judged to be below expectations and identified as part of a key issue for action. The implementation of new national guidance for the subject, together with improved resources, have been influential in this improvement.
128. Pupils in Year 6 have studied and evaluated the work of Picasso and Monet. Following this, all pupils have painted their own abstract pictures in the style of Picasso. In these strong and vivid images, pupils chose the colours for a particular effect, that to demonstrate a split personality. They have a firm understanding of the concept of design within the subject. As part of a series of lessons, pupils are currently involved in designing a sports kit that takes into consideration function, suitability and style. In the particular lesson observed, many pupils were able to describe clearly the most appropriate materials to be used for different sports clothes. Pupils use their sketchbooks for a range of purposes, although there is no clear development of specific artistic skills visible, such as styles of painting or colour mixing. Pupils in Year 6 sketched younger pupils during a gymnastics lesson but this work showed little attention to shade or texture and many of the images demonstrated a lack of sophistication.
129. Pupils in Year 2 have a good knowledge of the different colour groupings and apply this appropriately to the creation of a display based on the seasons of the year using 'hot' colours for

summer and 'cold' colours for winter. They have good control and their work is finished to a good standard.

130. Overall, the teaching of art is satisfactory, although one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. All lessons are planned, prepared and organised well. The aim of the lesson is shared with the class so that all pupils understand the purpose of the lesson, and their teachers' expectations. Clear instructions ensure that all pupils understand what to do and set to task quickly. In the Year 6 lesson on sports kits, the use of a good range of resources quickly engaged pupils in their work and stimulated discussion. Relationships are good and, where pupils are engaged in their work, they concentrate well and are productive. There is, however, insufficient emphasis on the artistic skills to be used; this was particularly evident in the unsatisfactory lesson, where pupils were expected to undertake a colouring-in exercise, which went on for most of the whole session. There was little opportunity for pupils to think creatively and, therefore, many of them became restless.
131. The co-ordination of the subject is sound. The co-ordinator's knowledge and understanding of the subject is good, and she has brought this to bear in developing the curriculum and through the quality of display in the school. A few very good displays, such as the 'Son of Sam' range, following the style of Rene Magritte, add considerably to the learning environment. Due to the adaptation of national guidance on art and design, to meet the needs of the pupils, most artistic experiences are carefully planned, but the development of specific artistic skills, such as sketching, is not systematically taught and the opportunity to create three-dimensional art is underdeveloped. Termly assessments are used to provide a broad overview of pupils' experiences, but the use of sketchbooks or a portfolio of work to support this is underdeveloped. Improved resources since the last inspection have, in many cases been used well and pupils now have a wider range of experiences than they did previously. Currently, due to the underdeveloped nature of the information and communication technology provision at the school, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use computers in their artwork. There is a limited range of books related to art from either a Western or a global perspective in the school library.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

132. Standards are in line with expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6, and are higher than expected in Years 3 and 4. This shows good improvement since the last inspection in 1997, when standards were below expectations in both Years 2 and 6. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, have made good progress from a below average start. Improvements in teaching, the organisation of the curriculum, and the availability of resources, account for this improvement.
133. In discussion with pupils in Year 6 it was evident that they have, in the past, gained appropriate knowledge and understanding of designing for a specific purpose and have used a satisfactory range of materials and tools, such as G-clamps, saws, and small electrical motors, in constructing their models. However, they have had insufficient opportunities to extend their skills this year and are, currently, working on a specific design and technology project for the first time.
134. Pupils in Year 2 use and build on the skills and techniques learnt previously. Before designing and making their own puppets, they investigate different styles of puppets, looking carefully at materials used and how they are joined and operated, for example, by using hands or fingers. Pupils' findings are recorded on simple charts. During the designing stage, pupils carefully make templates for the clothes and try out various joining techniques. In a more recent project, they gained new skills and understanding about the importance and use of wheels in everyday life, including wheel chairs, by going on to design and make their own vehicle with wheels.
135. The good teaching and systematic building of knowledge, skills and understanding continues through Years 3, 4 and 5. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are now achieving standards which are above average. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 did not have the benefit of such good teaching in their earlier years, so their standards are not so good. However, good teaching last year and this year, in Years 5 and 6, has enabled these pupils to achieve average standards.

136. The quality of teaching is good overall. All teachers have a good understanding of the subject. They ensure that a good emphasis is placed on the investigative and designing stage, not just the making. For instance pupils in Year 4 clearly spent time and attention investigating joining and finishing techniques when making purses from fabric. Pupils are also helped to compare different models and consider the uses and users of a product before designing their own. Because of this, in a good lesson seen in Year 5, pupils' understanding of how the shape, texture and packaging, as well as the taste, influence people when buying biscuits greatly increased. This was achieved through very good, probing questioning, which made the pupils work hard by thinking, predicting and observing carefully.
137. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has had the opportunity to monitor teaching and the quality of pupils' work. This has provided further insights into the subject to allow her to overcome the issues raised in the last report. The good scheme of work provides teachers with clear guidelines and now all statutory requirements are met. The curriculum is well planned, especially in its links with other subjects, such as literacy, numeracy and science. From Year 2, pupils are expected to label diagrams using correct terminology and spellings, for example 'seam' in the joining of fabrics. Findings and evaluation are recorded in a variety of ways, showing pupils' abilities to use lists, charts, and descriptions. Estimating and accurate measuring skills are reinforced as the pupils get older, but, as yet, the use of information and communication technology has not played a significant part in this subject. Links with science are particularly strong in Years 3 and 4. For instance, pupils in Year 3 made monster models using a simple hydraulic system with balloons to make the jaws open and close, whilst, in Year 4, pupils are currently applying their knowledge of electrical circuits by making torches. Due to continued reference to it by teachers, pupils' awareness of safety procedures has improved. The quality and quantity of learning resources has greatly improved and these are now good.

GEOGRAPHY

138. The standards being achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 are in line with expectations, but by the end of Year 6 they are below the standard expected. At the last inspection, they were above expectations in Year 2 and below expectations in Year 6. In relation to their particularly low prior attainment on entering the school, all pupils in Year 2 have made good progress since leaving the reception class. All pupils in Year 6 are currently making satisfactory progress and, in the aspect seen in their lesson, they were achieving average standards. However, their overall standards are below expectations because, up until two years ago, there was a lack of suitable guidelines for teachers to ensure the systematic building up of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, and a lack of careful assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress. Hence, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge.
139. The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to participate fully in lessons. Most pupils for whom English is an additional language have sufficient skills in English to ensure their full participation. Those at an early stage of learning to speak English receive good support when working in small groups, but minimal help in class, because of a lack of bi-lingual support.
140. A discussion with pupils in Year 6, as well as an analysis of their work and an observation of their performance during a lesson, shows that they have a basic knowledge of water cycles, a good understanding of climatic changes in mountainous areas and some in-depth study of life in France. However, much of their learning is disjointed, it does not clearly build on previous work, and is insecure. For example, although, during discussion, the pupils could name several mountain ranges and major rivers they were unsure as to their location. Whilst they knew the Alps were in France, a mixed-ability group all agreed that the Himalayas were in Spain. Pupils have clearly been suitably challenged on environmental issues and, in the lesson seen, probing questions helped pupils recall major national and international events. They were also given opportunities to consider the advantages and disadvantages of a local student housing development but these pupils clearly had no firm geographical understanding.
141. In Year 2, pupils regularly examine various types of maps, including the mythical Isle of Struay. They locate Birmingham and London on a map of the British Isles. By creating simple street maps of a city and a seaside town pupils show a good understanding of the concept of representing

different features, such as land, water, roads and buildings. They know of the basic symbols when making maps and make their own keys for interpretation. Pupils are aware of their own locality and have written postcards, to friends and relatives, about Birmingham.

142. Teaching is mainly good throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations about work and behaviour. Because of this, pupils present their work carefully and try hard. Most lessons are also calm and productive, although pupils in Year 6 do not have the same enthusiasm for the subject as the younger pupils. Resources and personal experiences are used well to engage pupils in their learning. In a good Year 1 lesson, the student teacher skilfully used her own travel experiences, and a range of practical activities, to help the pupils learn about life in Israel. During this project they, made and ate falafel, looked at pictures to explain difference in the weather, and compared their own homes to those in Jerusalem.
143. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They use this well to extend pupils' map-reading skills systematically throughout the school. In most classes, the amount of work recorded is good and shows that the teachers plan for pupils' different abilities. Extension work for higher- and middle-attaining pupils, such as crossword puzzles, and graphs of favourite holiday destinations, confirms this.
144. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has worked hard in the last two years to establish a good curriculum and ensure that teachers have easy access to a broad range of quality resources. The monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress is now taking place and is helping to raise standards. There are good links with other subjects, such as literacy and numeracy. During a Year 5 lesson, the temporary teacher worked hard and enthused pupils by using links to the football World Cup. Pupils were challenged well to use their skills in literacy and research by using the index of an atlas to find the countries competing and then locating them on a world map. There are, however, few opportunities for pupils to use computers to extend or develop their understanding of the subject.

HISTORY

145. Standards at the age of Years 2 and 6 are in line with expectations. All pupils make good progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. Standards at the end of Year 6, however, have improved since that time, due to better teaching and coverage of historical topics. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good gains in their historical knowledge and understanding.
146. At the end of Year 6, pupils know relevant information about a range of historical periods. Pupils have a clear understanding, for example, of the Ancient Egyptians, the Romans and the Indus Valley civilisation, as well as the Tudor, Victorian and Second World War periods of British history. Most pupils in Year 6 are particularly knowledgeable about various aspects of the Victorian period, especially relating to Birmingham. Many pupils are also confident in identifying some of the changes that have taken place throughout history, and readily place the periods they study in a proper chronological framework, successfully using time-lines for this purpose. At the end of Year 2, pupils know suitable details about the past. Pupils in Year 2 have a sound knowledge of a number of historical figures, such as Florence Nightingale and Samuel Pepys. They also successfully identify the ways in which people become famous. Pupils know interesting facts about important past events, such as the Great Fire of London and, in particular, they explain why the fire spread so quickly. Many pupils in Years 3 to 6 are confident in identifying some of the changes that have taken place throughout history, and place the periods they study in the correct chronological order. Pupils are keen to explain some important events that have taken place, such as the Roman invasion of Britain, and they recall the lives of famous people such as Lord Shaftesbury, and Henry VIII.
147. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall, and an example of very good practice was also observed. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and they make appropriate use of dates, events and artefacts, to help develop pupils' understanding of the past. Lessons are well planned and teachers provide an appropriate range of information for pupils. Teachers successfully use photographs, artefacts and visits to foster the pupils' interest. They also provide

opportunities for pupils to undertake research, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in turn enjoy the subject; they study historical items, books and pictures with enthusiasm, and settle well to the wide variety of tasks provided. In the instances of very good teaching where a particularly good range of resources and information is provided, activities are challenging, and teachers' expectations are high, pupils make very good progress. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, and useful comments of advice and encouragement are also added.

148. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The school has an appropriate scheme of work, based on national guidelines, and all areas of work are suitably covered. The co-ordinator is well informed about the subject, and she regularly analyses samples of pupils' work. She also has the opportunity to observe classroom practice, to see for herself the standards being achieved. Assessment procedures have improved, and they are now good, with suitable details about pupils' work being recorded. The writing activities undertaken, in various aspects of the subject, make a suitable contribution towards the development of pupils' literacy skills. Pupils are beginning to use information and communication technology to increase their historical knowledge, such as when pupils in Year 6 searched the Internet for historical facts on the Indus Valley civilisation. The work undertaken in history also makes a significant impact on pupils' cultural development, through the study of aspects of both British and other cultures.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

149. Standards in information and communication technology are below expectations at the end of Year 6, and well below expectations at the end of Year 2. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, have made unsatisfactory progress, although the progress made by these pupils is slightly better in Years 3 to 6. Standards have not improved since the last inspection, despite this being a key issue for action identified in the last report. The school has endeavoured to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for the subject, but limited resources have had a considerable impact on pupils' achievements. Due to funding arrangements that were beyond the control of the school, it was only in the last year that the school received funding to develop their computer suite and to undertake the national programme of staff development. These significant but recent developments, coupled with the use of a specialist support teacher, are poised to have a major impact on pupils' achievement.
150. By the end of Year 6, pupils' knowledge of computers and their uses are reasonable in relation to searching the World Wide Web. They have adequate control of the mouse, and an understanding of how to conduct and refine a search and save their favourite web addresses. This enabled them to find out further information for their history topic on the Indus Valley Civilisation. In a mathematics lesson, based on square numbers, most pupils were able to log on and off, and reduce screen sizes so that two windows were visible and then highlight, cut and paste numbers from one window to another. However, their knowledge of control, and other experiences, such as those of designing multi-media presentations, have been limited by a lack of technology.
151. By the end of Year 2, pupils name the significant parts of a computer, such as the mouse and the keyboard, but struggle with that of the hard drive. However, through their work in science, they appreciate that technology, such as televisions and telephones, has many uses in their lives. Pupils' skills are, however, limited. They control the mouse reasonably accurately, but are unsure of many of the basic icons. They have a simple understanding of how to fill spaces with colour and used this to good effect to create their own colourful 'Elmer the Elephant.' They have given rudimentary commands to the programmable floor robot, and type their names using the keyboard.
152. The quality of teaching observed was good overall and sometimes very good. This is an improvement on the last report when teaching was judged satisfactory. Much of the teaching during this inspection was undertaken by the subject co-ordinator, the new specialist teacher. Other teachers made very little use of class-based computers during lessons observed during the week. The co-ordinator, however, working with small groups of pupils, gave precise, clear instructions that emphasised the development of pupils' skills. In Year 2, pupils thus learnt very well within one lesson in relation to their prior attainment. There were good links made between other subjects, such as art and mathematics, which helped make pupils' learning more

meaningful. The use of good questions encouraged pupils to think for themselves. The very good relationships gave pupils a sense of security so that they were confident to have a go. Exceptionally good use was made of pupils' mistakes as teaching points for the whole group so that all made at least good progress. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed their work; they were often very excited by the novelty of working in the suite; which for many of them was a new experience.

153. The co-ordination of the subject is currently good; it has been adequately catered for during the co-ordinators temporary absence for a year. The co-ordinator and the headteacher are strongly committed to raising the profile of the subject and of pupils' achievement. They have identified all the key areas for development. There have been good improvements in both accommodation and resources since the last inspection. The new suite opened in May 2002 and there is now a good ratio of computers to pupils and a reasonable range of peripherals and software.

MUSIC

154. Standards, at the end of Years 2 and 6, are in line with those expected. All pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been maintained since the time of the last inspection. At that time, no judgement was made about standards at the end of Year 6.
155. During assembly, pupils readily sing a variety of songs and hymns, with satisfactory control over rhythm and pitch. They put much expression into their singing, and they perform well together, with some pupils also being confident enough to sing alone. Pupils sing a number of songs from memory, and are most careful to sing the words clearly.
156. Pupils in Year 6 have produced their own musical compositions, based on the noises of a volcano, and they successfully vary both the texture and dynamics of their work. They perform for each other and then suggest ways in which their performance might be improved. Pupils readily listen to a range of recorded music. They have developed a sound musical vocabulary, and, although a number find it difficult, the majority are confident in using this to discuss the quality of the work. By the end of Year 6, pupils can sing a range of songs, sometimes in two parts, showing satisfactory control over both breathing and wording.
157. Pupils in Year 2 recognise a variety of musical instruments, and many are able to describe the sounds they make, carefully using the correct terminology. Pupils explore sounds, using an appropriate range of untuned percussion instruments and chime bars, and they follow a simple score successfully.
158. The overall quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory, with good examples being seen during the inspection. Lessons are well planned and generally brisk in pace, with a suitable range of resources being provided for pupils to use. Pupils are usually kept busy, and this clearly benefits their rate of learning. Just occasionally, the teacher's introduction is too long, and this limits the amount of time for pupils to participate. In such circumstances, a small number of pupils also become inattentive. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory, with clear instructions and demonstrations being provided. As well as joining in themselves, teachers also make particularly effective use of pupils, to demonstrate different aspects of work to other members of the class, and this encourages all pupils to maintain their interest. Pupils are, therefore, not only keen to listen to music, and, whilst a number do not find it easy, many are confident in offering opinions about what they hear. Pupils are particularly appreciative of the work of others, and they readily applaud their performances. In the lessons where the teaching is good, the teachers' subject knowledge is particularly secure, they provide a wide variety of learning experiences, the pace of the lesson is especially brisk, and pupils make good progress. Pupils then really enjoy their music, singing well, playing instruments confidently, and working happily with other pupils.
159. The co-ordination of the subject is good. There is an appropriate scheme of work, based partly on the government's curriculum guidelines and, through careful planning, all areas of work are successfully covered. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator, who is both well qualified and enthusiastic, reviews plans of the work to be covered by her colleagues, and also has the opportunity to observe class lessons taking place, to see for herself the standards being achieved. Good procedures are in place for assessing the work of pupils, and these are helpful in identifying particular strengths and weaknesses in the performance of

individual pupils. This has been used to guide pupils into taking up the recorder and auditioning for and joining the cathedral choir. The school is just beginning to make use of information and communication technology, such as in the composing activities undertaken by pupils in Year 6. Pupils listen to music from different countries, and this helps to enhance their cultural development. The school now has a good array of appropriate musical instruments from other cultures. Good use is also made of visiting pianists and voluntary music teachers, whose skills also help to enhance the enjoyment of the pupils. The school makes satisfactory provision for extra-curricular music activities for pupils. Careful consideration is made in planning and providing this provision to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the opportunities that the school provides.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

160. Standards in the elements of physical education observed during the inspection are broadly in line with expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils have continued to make satisfactory progress and there has been a significant improvement in standards and in the provision for swimming, which were issues raised during the last inspection.
161. By the end of Years 2 and 6, planning clearly shows that all aspects of the National Curriculum for physical education have been covered. In the Year 6 lesson observed, pupils demonstrated good skills in the out door and adventurous activity. Using skills and approaches developed in a number of lessons, a communicator in each group gave verbal instructions to the rest of their blindfolded team so that they could create a shape, such as a square, with a length of rope. In their subsequent demonstrations and explanations, pupils reflected well on their practice and offered insights to the success of other teams. In swimming, 90 per cent of pupils are able to swim 25 metres by the end of Year 6, and a significant proportion can swim over 500 metres.
162. By the end of Year 2, most know that the 'warm up' is part of their lesson routine and a few appreciate that they are preparing their muscles for exercise. The accuracy of throwing and catching a ball is varied, some being quite accurate whilst many tend to be wide of the mark. Most pupils have a reasonable knowledge of strategies of defence and attack, and a few explain how they use these skills to prevent the 'pig' acquiring the ball during a game of 'piggy in the middle.'
163. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although there are some examples of very good teaching in Year 6. Most teachers have a reasonable knowledge and understanding of the subject so that lessons are appropriately planned and prepared. Lessons are well structured and follow an established pattern of warm up and cool down. All included effective use of pupils' demonstration and the very best included evaluations by pupils that helped to refine their thinking and actions. Teachers describe the lesson's intention with clarity and purpose so that pupils are focused on the work in hand. However, such explanations, especially in lessons in Key Stage 1 can be a little too long, and this slows the pace of the lesson, and pupils become slightly restless. Relationships are good in all lessons, and, because of this, most pupils are willing to 'have a go'. Teachers' expectations are made explicit in most lessons so that all lessons are conducted safely. The very good lesson in Year 6 included all of these elements with the added bonus of having very good links with literacy and numeracy. Its other significant strengths were the teachers' knowledge and understanding that led to a very well structured and thought out lesson. In addition, the great clarity in instructions and the individual interventions, based on very good assessment that developed pupils' problem-solving skills very well, were also very forceful in developing pupils' abilities to work co-operatively.
164. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The monitoring of the subject has improved since the last inspection; lessons are now observed, plans scrutinised and pupils surveyed to gain an insight into their thoughts. There is, therefore, a good knowledge of the subject, and an area identified by the school for development, although not seen during the inspection, is dance. There is an enriched curriculum with many good sporting events, including, regular training sessions and competitive matches. Good use is made of the Catholic Schools' group for swimming and athletics, whilst in Years 5 and 6 pupils also benefit from a bi-annual visit to an outdoor pursuits area. The local area also provides more novel sporting experiences where, for example, at the end of each term, pupils in Years 5 and 6 go ice-skating. Curriculum planning ensures that all groups

of pupils receive their full entitlement. Teachers use national guidance to help them assess pupils' efforts, although they do not adequately cover what particular skills a pupil has mastered. Nevertheless, teachers do have a good knowledge of pupils and use this to encourage those talented individuals to involve themselves in club events, such as swimming. There are good facilities at the school; including a large hall and playground. There is a good range of fixed and moveable apparatus and this has been checked for safety. There is a reasonable quantity of small games equipment, which is mainly new and, therefore, colourful, in good condition, and appealing to use.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

165. Religious education is inspected separately by a Diocesan inspector.