

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LONGWILL SCHOOL**

Northfield, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103603

Headteacher: Mr P Plant

Reporting inspector: Mary Last  
17171

Dates of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2001

Inspection number: 196323

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	- Special
School category:	- Community special
Age range of pupils:	- 3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	- Mixed
School address:	- Bell Hill - Northfield - Birmingham
Postcode:	- B31 1LD
Telephone number:	- 0121 475 3923
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Appropriate authority:	- Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	- Mr David Hyslop, OBE
Date of previous inspection:	- May, 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17171	Ms M Last	Registered inspector	Music Foundation stage Equal opportunities Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils' taught? What should the school do to improve further?
19322	Ms J Bedawi	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
32055	Mr G Davies	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Geography History	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development British sign language
23300	Ms L Evans	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
3055	Mr C Tombs	Team Inspector	Mathematics Physical education Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Longwill School is a well established community school which caters for up to 58 pupils between three and eleven years of age who are severely or profoundly deaf. There are currently 53 pupils on roll including 33 boys, with four girls and ten boys under five. Pupils mostly come from Birmingham, but almost a quarter travel from neighbouring areas and all use transport arranged by the local authority. Thirty-one pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is high in comparison to other similar schools and reflects the high level of need in the school's catchment area. Twenty-three pupils are drawn from ethnic community groups and 28 pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. The school actively promotes sign bilingualism which promotes pupils' communication in English and also their ability to communicate through British Sign Language (BSL). Pupils at Longwill use BSL as their first language, others are acquiring BSL, but a few parents and children do not share a common first language. The school has ten pupils with cochlea implants who use an increasing amount of spoken English.

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

Longwill is an effective school where pupils are taught in a highly supportive, stimulating, yet challenging environment. The development of the pupils' communication, language and understanding are at the heart of the school's purpose. Good standards of teaching and learning support are delivered through high quality signing at all times. The exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning of the pupils throughout the school day owes much to the excellent relationships they have with adults and the role models provided by all staff, especially those who are deaf. The headteacher provides energetic and charismatic leadership. His 'hands on' approach means that he can talk knowledgeably about individual children and understand their needs. Together with his assistant headteachers, he provides a clear focus to the school's work. Parents are unanimous in their praise of the school and the improvement they see in their children's skills and language. They are extremely supportive of the work of the school particularly for the youngest children and during the inspection many worked alongside the children. All parents benefit greatly from the superb opportunities to develop their own language skills in BSL or English so that they may help them learn. As a result communication with their children is improved. The school takes care to spend its funds wisely, has good relationships with the governors and provides good value for money.

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

- Provides good quality teaching in interesting lessons which motivates the pupils so that they concentrate and learn well displaying extremely high standards of behaviour so that they are courteous, polite and confident
- Organises the school day to make very good use of time available and pupils move swiftly and orderly between classes
- Promotes maximum opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills through excellent teaching of British Sign Language with outstanding role models from all staff especially those who are deaf
- The headteacher provides energetic and charismatic leadership to the school and with his assistant headteachers develops innovative methods and resources to support the future needs of the deaf locally and nationally
- Enjoys excellent relationships with, and gives superb support to, all parents to improve communication with their children through learning sign language or support in their own first/community languages
- Makes particularly good provision for the teaching of information and communication

technology and provides a stimulating introduction to education for children under five with excellent opportunities for their parents to work alongside them in school.

### What could be improved

- Opportunities for individual pupils to be included in mainstream classes on a regular basis and monitor the work covered and the progress made
- Arrangements for the overview of audiology by the co-ordinator to ensure resources are sufficient to meet pupils' needs
- Systematic monitoring of the curriculum at senior management level to ensure that the requirements of each subject are fully met.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1997 and has made good progress in meeting the key issues of the last inspection and raising standards since then, especially in the monitoring of teaching and learning. As a result of introducing a new policy and strategies, teaching is good overall with 35 per cent of lessons being very good or excellent. The headteacher or assistant headteachers have observed all teachers since September 2000 with the exception of lessons for children under five where only teachers' planning has been scrutinised. This results in higher quality teaching and represents significant improvement since the last inspection which judged teaching to be unsatisfactory in 20 per cent of lessons. Progress in the role of co-ordinators, however, has not been so successfully implemented. Whilst the school now has co-ordinators for each subject taught, there are no checking procedures at senior management level to ensure that teachers cover all the necessary content of their subjects and that pupils learn as much as they should. The new curriculum for children under five has been well established and the school now meets the necessary requirements of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs and has raised the spiritual content of assemblies. The school prospectus still omits several topics which should be included and progress in this area is unsatisfactory because parents do not receive the range of information to which they are entitled. All other minor issues have been successfully improved. The school is well placed to continue improving.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	<b>Key</b>	
Speaking and listening	B	A	very good	A
Reading	C	B	good	B
Writing	C	C	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	B	unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	B	B	poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B		

*Judgements concerning the pupils' standards in speaking and listening reflect their achievements in British Sign Language and in spoken English where appropriate.*

Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in all their work at the school and in particular with regard to their previous experience and learning. In relation to their individual abilities as outlined in their statements of special educational needs, pupils do very well and achieve

particularly good gains in learning in information and communication technology where the practical nature of the work is stimulating and promotes their interest and enjoyment. In English, pupils make good gains in speaking and listening and reading but still require help to achieve as well in writing. In mathematics, pupils' progress is satisfactory and pupils learn to apply what they have learnt in practical tasks such as shopping. By the time they are age eleven, pupils have grown into confident learners who are genuinely interested in doing well in lessons and show exemplary standards of behaviour and personal development.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and interested in all lessons and activities organised.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are always courteous to all the staff and visitors. They know how to behave in the classroom, in the dining hall and at play.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils show respect to all the staff and visitors. They care for each other and respect each other's feelings.
Attendance	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are rarely absent through choice.

The pupils show exemplary standards of behaviour in and around the school. They are courteous and polite and always keen to communicate – which they do with confidence. Pupils attend regularly and show respect to all the adults in the school. They enjoy excellent relationships with each other and with staff and they work well as a result because they all want to do well. All the pupils are happy at school and contribute to the vibrant quality of the learning environment.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	N/a	N/a

*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 good throughout the school and no lessons were less than satisfactory. Forty-seven per cent of lessons were good and 35 per cent very good or outstanding. The very best teaching is characterised by well planned activities which promote pupils' communication through BSL and which include good opportunities for pupils to enjoy their learning but understand its purpose. In English, teaching is good for all pupils and concentrates on their understanding, listening and use of language to develop maximum effective communication. In mathematics, teaching is satisfactory. There is an increasing emphasis on pupils finding things out for themselves and using information and communication technology to enhance their learning and to improve the presentation of their work. In science, teaching is good and presents challenging and interesting investigations which help pupils explore and understand the world around them. Teachers pay good attention to communication in all aspects of their work and all adults, particularly those who are deaf themselves, provide excellent role models in the use of signing. Pupils make good progress in their literacy because teachers plan careful coverage of signing, speaking, listening and reading. Teachers help pupils with their writing and provide good opportunities for them to write with increasing accuracy, but their delay in language often limits pupils' activities in this area. Teachers promote the pupils' use of numeracy in all subjects of the curriculum so that they use their skills to good effect. For example, they count the beats in



music and dance and they carry out surveys and collate and analyse the resulting data. Developing the pupils' personal skills and ensuring they learn about the hearing world around them informs the basis of the school's work in personal, social and health education. The school is rigorous in ensuring that teaching meets the needs of all pupils, whatever their needs or abilities; as a result those with special needs or English as an additional language learn at least as well as their peers. The work of the support staff is a major factor in high quality teaching and learning; they are skilled and experienced in learning support and provide a valuable resource to the school.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a broadly based curriculum, which fully meets statutory requirements. It includes English, mathematics and science and ensures the pupils' communication needs are met through the use of BSL and sign bilingualism. A particular strength is the provision and effective use of information and communication technology within all subject areas.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school ensures that pupils, and their parents, are fully supported in their work and reflects the diversity of home languages in its displays and communications with parents. Staff plan good opportunities for pupils to learn both English and BSL and makes good provision for translation and interpretation.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Arrangements for the pupils' moral development is very good and the school successfully instils a sense of right and wrong and an understanding of the needs of others. Social and cultural provision are good and the school reflects the diverse cultures represented by its pupils. It also actively promotes the world of the deaf. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is no more than satisfactory because teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils to reflect upon their own thoughts and beliefs and those of others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	All staff demonstrate high levels of commitment to the pupils and are rigorous in the care and support they provide. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory and staff are vigilant in protecting these deaf children against difficulties in a hearing world.

The curriculum is good and provides a good balance of subjects throughout the weeks and over the term. Pupils are well cared for in school and benefit from the high levels and standards of signing and communication. The school has excellent relationships with parents who regularly come to school, sometimes working alongside their children; the parents of children under five are particularly involved in their children's work.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior management lead by example. The aim of the school, 'the child at the heart of the school', is fully reflected in practice.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body is keen to be involved and is generally supportive. The governors are currently reviewing their practice to give them a greater understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has begun to collect information so that it can improve its own practice but does not yet have consistent procedures in place throughout the school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The accommodation is good but remains inaccessible to some pupils and some areas need refurbishing. Resources are good and well targeted to meet the needs of individual pupils so that they learn well, but those for audiology are in need of urgent attention. There are sufficient well qualified staff to meet the needs of the pupils and their skills in British Sign Language are highly commendable. The role models provided by the staff are outstanding.

The school is well staffed with a very good team of hearing and deaf adults who are well qualified and experienced. The school uses its good range of resources well to help pupils learn but some current yet temporary difficulties over accommodation and arrangements for audiology mean that the school's support system for providing replacement aids and equipment in times of need are not fully effective. The school has good arrangements for administration and financial management and spends its money very wisely and for the benefit of the pupils.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The very good teaching and the progress made by their children</li> <li>• The improvement in the pupils' behaviour and maturity</li> <li>• The high expectations that pupils will work hard and achieve well</li> <li>• The range of activities available within and outside of lessons</li> <li>• The hard work and dedication of the headteacher and his staff</li> </ul>	No suggestions

The inspection team is happy to endorse the parents' views concerning the excellent support the school provides, as well as the good strategies for parents to develop their language and signing skills the better to communicate with their children. Inspectors also agree that the pupils learn very well and improve their behaviour. The expertise of the staff in all areas of the school is a fundamental reason for the pupils' success and acknowledged by parents and inspectors. Parents of children under five are happy with the supportive introduction their children receive to life at school.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

## HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

1. All pupils enter the school with significant problems in English and communication caused by their profound deafness. Standards are below national expectations. However, in line with their previous language experience and their all-round ability, pupils make good progress as a direct result of good teaching in a language-rich environment. The school is well aware of the principles for curriculum inclusion and provides suitable learning challenges and responds well to pupils' diverse learning needs.
2. The youngest pupils in school, in the foundation stage, have a range of abilities on entry. A minority of pupils enter with functional skills in British Sign Language (BSL) because they are the deaf children of deaf parents, but even within this group the children's ability and skills are varied. All children therefore require intensive language input to be able to communicate effectively. However, with high quality teaching and opportunities to practise and develop their communication skills regularly, children quickly develop their language awareness so that by the end of their time in the foundation stage they use it effectively. For example, they can express their ideas, wants, and needs with confidence to adults. When choosing a drink for an activity the lowest attaining pupils sign 'want' followed by pointing to their chosen drink whilst higher attaining pupils have learnt to cluster signs together to indicate 'I want a drink please'. Older pupils recognise their own names, those of other pupils and labels on their preferred foods. They recognise numbers and some higher attaining pupils count past 20. All children can count the characters from a picture in a storybook. The children's skills in information and communication technology are outstanding. All enjoy using the computers and even the youngest are developing skills in the use of the mouse or in choosing colours to paint a picture on the screen. The highest attaining pupils can print their picture unaided and a few can switch between programs. When moving from the foundation stage to the first year of compulsory schooling, these children, whilst still below the standards expected for children of their age in mainstream schools, are achieving very well in the light of their severe deafness. They enter the first year of school able to communicate and benefit from work based on the National Curriculum.
3. Pupils from five to seven years of age make at least satisfactory and frequently good progress. They build on the good opportunities provided in the foundation stage and now formalise their learning through National Curriculum subjects. Pupils are tolerant of each other and are increasingly working in pairs and groups effectively. Pupils with additional special educational needs and those from community groups whose first language is not English are very well supported, and good attention is given to their particular needs by all members of staff. As a result, they make progress in line with other pupils throughout the school. There is no measurable difference between the progress of boys and girls or between different age groups. By the time they are eleven years of age, pupils have developed extremely well in their self-confidence. For example they are able to communicate effectively with visitors and few are disturbed or distracted when inspectors enter the classroom. A major achievement is the way in which all pupils manage their own behaviour so that they attend well in classes and are motivated learners who are sufficiently mature to move successfully to secondary education. The very few pupils who have more advanced skills in English, particularly in spoken English, benefit from opportunities to study alongside their mainstream peers for short periods of time each week. These pupils do well in terms of social and communication skills, but other achievements are less well documented and currently only two such pupils benefit from such opportunities.

4. While standards are below national expectations in English, pupils achieve well and make good progress throughout the school. The very good support given by teachers, support assistants and signing tutors is a major factor in the pupils' success. Because they sign very well and have developed good strategies for learning they make good progress in speaking, listening and reading (through the use of sign). Pupils' progress throughout the school is less well developed in writing because of the difficulties they experience in transferring BSL to standard written English. The staff provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in this area and with time they improve. In National Curriculum tests pupils aged seven are working towards or within Level 1. However, by the age of eleven almost a quarter of pupils have achieved Levels 3 or 4, and this is a significant improvement on results of previous years.
5. Standards in mathematics are below national expectations, but pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and over time, steadily building on their knowledge skills and understanding. By the age of four, children are beginning to see how numbers can be useful to them in their lives. For example they count how many children want to drink or play a game using a giant dice on the floor. By the age of five most children are beginning to undertake simple calculations such as counting one 'more' or one 'less'. From the ages of five to seven pupils extend their interest in mathematics and use numbers and figures from their own lives to inform their work, for example taking surveys amongst their friends and recording in simple block graphs. Staff introduce interesting activities and pay regular attention to developing pupils' mathematical skills in lessons and around the school. As a result, by the time they are eleven, six out of the nine pupils are working at Level 2 and one each at Levels 3 and 4 of the National Curriculum. These achievements represent good long-term gains in learning over a six-year period and confirm improving trends over time and since the last inspection.
6. Standards in science overall are below national expectations. However, a number of pupils at seven and eleven years of age match the average national expectations and all pupils achieve well and make good progress. This year for example, three seven-year-old pupils achieved Level 2 and two eleven-year-old pupils achieved Level 4. This is a significant achievement that owes much to the support provided by all the adults in the school. Pupils aged eight make progress in their knowledge of the world around them, for example the weather systems or how the position of a light source affects the shadows it produces. The oldest pupils in school have learnt about the eye and how it functions including the purposes of the retina and the optic nerve.
7. In information and communication technology (ICT) pupils achieve very well. Even the youngest pupils under five understand how to control and manipulate the mouse to produce the effect they are seeking on the screen. They enter the letters of their name to identify their paintings and many go on to print unaided. As pupils move through the school they use ICT as a tool in other subjects and to present better quality work. Displays and labelling around the school demonstrate how comprehensively teachers promote the use of computers and other technology in order to boost pupils' achievement.
8. Pupils achieve well in all other subjects and the recognition that they receive through certificates and other awards boosts their self-confidence and self-esteem. For example, during the inspection week, children who were graduating from the reception class to the first class of the main school, took part in an awards ceremony. Wearing their graduation cloaks, each child was sufficiently confident to stand on the stage and receive his or her certificate detailing their most recent achievements. Many parents attended this ceremony and recognised its value in identifying the progress their children had made.

9. The pupils' achievements would not be possible without the acquisition of high standards in communication mainly through the development of skilled signing as a result of very good tuition in BSL and English. Those pupils who have had cochlea implants also develop good standards of speech and are confident in speaking out in class and at other social times of the day. Assessments, based on the National Curriculum descriptors for speaking and listening, indicate that pupils aged seven are generally achieving at Levels 1 or 2 and by the end of their time in the school they are signing at the equivalent of Levels 3 or 4. These results indicate that higher attaining pupils are achieving signed communication skills in line with the listening and speaking standards of their hearing mainstream peers. Although pupils' attainment on entry is broadly similar to that in 1997, their achievements are significantly higher and the standards achieved by the school represent a significant improvement since the last inspection.

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

10. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Pupils are very happy and pleased to be at school. Their responses in lessons are very good overall as they are keen to learn, enjoy their lessons and make very good progress in developing their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning because teachers plan tasks which are lively, varied and well matched to the pupils' levels of understanding. Pupils respond well to efforts made by staff to motivate and encourage them to participate in activities. They take pride in their achievements and are very pleased when they receive praise, particularly when in front of the whole school such as when they receive awards in assembly.
11. Behaviour in and around the school is very good. Pupils are polite and friendly to visitors. They behave exceptionally well in lessons. At lunchtimes, pupils of all ages and abilities eat sensibly so that the meal is a truly social occasion. It is made even more valuable as a means of social communication because all the dinner supervisors and kitchen staff sign BSL competently and the children discuss what they prefer to eat and about the events that have happened at school or at home with all the staff. After lunch pupils relax or play together co-operatively in the playground and are again able to communicate well with all the adults on duty.
12. Pupils' behaviour on visits out of school is excellent, for example they enjoy the opportunity of visiting the local swimming pool and respond well to staff instructions so that they are safe in the water. Behaviour overall is very good indeed and pupils are outstandingly responsive to visitors. They welcome them warmly and are always willing to talk about their school and how they feel about it. In lessons pupils behave well. Although one or two pupils have a few problems with controlling their own behaviour, which can sometimes affect their concentration, the school's system for dealing with such behaviour works well. However, pupils generally behave well in lessons as a result of the good support they receive. Adults have high expectations that pupils will do what is required of them.
13. Relationships are excellent. Pupils have a very high respect for all the adults in the school and are very eager to please them by learning and behaving as well as they can. For example in a design and technology lesson, when a pupil with physical difficulty became frustrated making an electric switch due to difficulty in using the tools, the teacher modified the process and enabled her to complete the task successfully. This pleased her, boosted her confidence and avoided the negative response which the pupil had sometimes displayed. The excellent relationships between all the staff and pupils has a major impact on the way pupils behave because they respect and want to please the staff; these positive attitudes consequently help their concentration and learning.

14. Pupils' personal development is very good. The pupils understand the routines of the day and respond quickly and promptly to start or finish their work. They move well around the school, stepping aside to let people pass and line up in orderly queues. Older pupils carry out monitor tasks in class and several take registers to and from the office. Older pupils help each other spontaneously when they see the need. They are honest and during the inspection one pupil seeing a coin on the floor immediately handed it to the headteacher. The pupils' efforts around the school are rewarded by stickers and certificates and all pupils take a pride in choosing their preferred rewards and display them proudly. Pupils understand that the school will take sanctions if they misbehave, such as expecting them to finish work in their own time, but understand the fairness of these sanctions.
15. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development have all improved since the last inspection. Where these were generally positive they are now a strength of the school and have a direct influence on the outcomes achieved by the school and the progress that pupils are able to make by the age of eleven.

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

16. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and lessons are well planned with a consistent focus upon BSL so that every opportunity is taken to maximise the pupils' communication skills. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching and learning between age groups or for pupils of different abilities or ethnic backgrounds. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and it is good in 47 per cent of lessons and very good or outstanding in 35 per cent. The highest quality teaching is characterised by a clear focus on what the pupils should learn with identified support for lower attaining pupils and more challenging tasks for higher achieving pupils so that they learn as much as possible. These high standards of teaching represent a good level of improvement since the last inspection when almost 20 per cent of lessons were judged unsatisfactory and 33 per cent very good. The improvement is mainly due to the drive and determination of the headteacher and his assistant headteachers in implementing a new policy for teaching and learning which outlines the school's expectations of teachers.
17. The manner in which teachers, support assistants and deaf BSL tutors promote the use of sign bilingualism is extremely good. Their models of sign language are excellent and the attention they pay to speaking, listening, reading and writing is good. Teachers are rigorous in ensuring that pupils see a written version of the vocabulary they are using, they expect pupils to try and produce the word themselves. For example, in a geography lesson, the teacher waited while one pupil thought about how to spell the word 'pharmacy' to describe a shop he had seen. After consulting the dictionary the pupil finger-spelt 'p', 'h', 'a' and when he was unsure how to continue, another pupil with a cochlea implant and more speech, immediately finished off the word by pronouncing 'pharmacy' very clearly. This pleased the teacher and the pupils congratulated each other on their joint success.
18. The quality of teaching in English is good and is well balanced between communication through BSL and/or spoken English and coverage of the English and literacy curriculum. Teachers ensure that pupils read and become aware of a range of text and genre, including poetry, prose and drama. Much work is of a practical nature, for example in a drama lesson with eleven-year-old pupils the teacher encouraged them to pass their emotions to their partners and to 'pull their strings' to mimic movement. This exercise was enjoyable and the pupils showed their enthusiasm and interest by concentrating until the end of the lesson when they recorded their progress on film.

19. The teaching of literacy, including reading and writing is good. Teachers and support assistants are aware of the need to reinforce all aspects of literacy in their lessons. For nursery children teachers introduce the initial letters of words and encourage pupils to sign or say them. One nursery pupil signed the days of the week using initial letters until a higher attaining pupil differentiated between 'Tuesday' and 'Thursday' by including 'hurs' in the latter.
20. Teachers pay good attention to developing pupils' writing skills but are aware that achievements in writing are less well advanced due to the pupils' hearing loss. The influence of BSL affects the way pupils construct sentences and so teachers pay careful heed to ensuring that pupils understand how, for example, sentences are constructed. In a lesson on sentence work with five to six-year-old pupils, the teacher built up a complete sentence on the board. She ensured that pupils understood the use of the capital letter and full stop when building the sentence 'We saw the man making the fire.' The work was based on an earlier visit to a steam engine museum and pupils were able to recall other events to express in writing. However, despite their apparent understanding of the teacher's model they needed considerable adult support before being able to put words in correct sentence order for a present tense version saying 'The man makes a fire.'
21. Teaching continues to be good for older pupils aged ten. As a result of continued work on sentence construction pupils are able to write 'You make a cup of tea in a teapot.' Teachers extend the work expected of higher attaining pupils and elicit the addition of ' . . . and afterwards pour it into the cup', effectively challenging the range of pupils' abilities. Teachers also make very good use of computers to help pupils draft and redraft their work; pupils respond well to the motivation of seeing their writing on the screen and concentrate well until they have completed their work.
22. All staff have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work and, because relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, pupils respond well and want to do their best. They pay excellent attention to teachers in lessons and regularly demonstrate their reliability and independence by working alone or in pairs. Very occasionally one pupil will dominate another in pair work, as in a mathematics lesson where one pupil gave his partner no chance to share the work but dominated by quickly working out the answers and entering them through the keyboard. However, with good classroom management incidents such as these are short-lived and resolved effectively by rearranging the pupils' responsibilities. More typical of pair work was the very effective strategy in a different mathematics lesson where the teacher carefully matched the pairs according to ability. The support assistant provided very skilled, carefully structured, step-by-step guidance to the lowest attaining pupils whilst two higher attaining pupils were left to organise themselves. 'Easy' signed one as they took a look at the worksheet, but they soon realised it was not so simple as they had several attempts before discovering an effective method of identifying the frequency of vowels in selected words and recording the data accurately. This strategy of targeting support and advice to the pupils, according to their individual ability, is very effective in supporting those with greater needs whilst challenging and extending the work and effort of the highest attaining pupils.
23. The work of the support staff, including those who are deaf themselves, is a major factor in the high standards of teaching and learning. The staff are committed to putting the pupils' communication and understanding at the heart of their work and they use various effective ways of doing so. Foremost amongst these is the use of sign and spoken English and all staff provide very good role models in this regard. Closely allied to this, however, are the methods they use to make learning meaningful to the pupils, particularly in the context of deaf pupils in a hearing world. For example, when consolidating pupils' understanding of light-controlled pedestrian crossings, staff emphatically and dramatically reinforced the need to keep looking

right and left as they crossed even though the lights were green and the traffic apparently stopped. The pupils quickly picked up on the idea that a stray motorist might 'jump' the lights and they would not be able to hear him coming. Similarly, with children under five, staff took them to a well known local beauty spot where they could look down over the city, land and sky. These practical activities are well managed by staff. They use their own dramatic skills to emulate drives in cars or how to watch the traffic and these enjoyable demonstrations are so stimulating that they lodge in pupils' minds to reinforce the teaching point.

24. Teachers have a good working knowledge of the subjects they teach, and deliver their lessons with confidence and style. The pupils' behaviour is outstanding and the benefit of the good work in communication is evident in the way pupils speak and sign to visitors. Teachers encourage pupils to identify what they have learnt generally through a short 'recap' session at the very end of lessons. This helps pupils to understand what they have learnt and to see where they need to improve. Supportive marking of pupils' work also helps in this regard, although some teachers add more developmental comments to the pupils' work than others. Teachers and support staff are skilled in assessing pupils' progress and understanding in lessons through effective use of questioning. They frequently ask 'how' and 'why' questions encouraging pupils to explain their methodology and thinking. These strategies are very effective, but teachers sometimes miss opportunities to record the spontaneous gains made by pupils in lessons. The quality of targets in the pupils' individual education plans do not help in this regard. They are often too broad and unspecific so that neither teachers nor pupils can easily identify progress and this inconsistency between subjects is not helpful in identifying the work pupils have covered, how well they have understood and what skills they have acquired.
25. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers plan practical tasks which help pupils to develop and understand their use of numbers and support assistants give very helpful guidance. Younger pupils enjoy playing a wide variety of games with numbers, from ordering them into sequence in the reception class to playing number games and completing number puzzles when they are seven. Teachers cover a good range of activities so that by the age of eleven pupils understand the principles of algebra, data handling and can sensibly make predictions about frequency. Teachers and support staff make good arrangements to meet the needs of the highest and lowest attaining pupils in the class by planning group work according to their needs. The support assistants are especially skilled in explaining concepts to pupils who need extra help. The school is developing a sensible focus upon the use of numeracy in all other subjects of the curriculum by ensuring the teachers provide opportunities to count or calculate whenever possible.
26. Teaching in science is good based on the small sample of lessons seen. Teachers plan a good mixture of practical activities which pupils enjoy and respond to with enthusiasm. Teaching is well planned and assessment is satisfactory. In information and communications technology (ICT) teaching is particularly effective because it stimulates pupils' thinking and helps them to increase their knowledge of, and skills within, the world around them. The major strength in ICT is the effective way in which teachers encourage the pupils' use of ITC in other subjects of the curriculum and this strength is illustrated in the many examples of computer generated displays in the school. Teaching in all other subjects is good and enables all pupils to make good gains in their learning. The specific skills in signing are used very effectively by all staff and the emphasis on the use of English is a clear strength.

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



27. The school provides a good, broadly based curriculum, which fully meets statutory requirements. It is relevant because it addresses the communication needs of the pupils very well, through BSL and sign bilingualism. It includes appropriate arrangements for English, mathematics and science. The provision for ICT is a strength of the curriculum because teachers plan good opportunities for ICT to be used consistently as a tool for learning in all subjects. This initiative starts with the children under five and continues throughout the school; older pupils are therefore able to research information on the computer, use it to send faxes/e-mail or retrieve information from CD-ROMs – all skills which promote pupils' independent learning very effectively. The school has broadened the scope for creative opportunities since the last inspection. It has incorporated a very good programme of dance as part of physical education and creative arts. A higher than usual proportion of timetabled time is given over to BSL and literacy, which is appropriate for hearing impaired pupils. However, this has the effect of squeezing other subjects, so that time for them is very limited. In religious education for example, there is insufficient time given to assure appropriate coverage of the locally agreed syllabus. The school complies with statutory requirements for religious education and acts of worship. Since the last inspection a good foundation stage curriculum has been put in place in line with new national directives. The schemes for science, ICT, design and technology, history and geography have been rewritten, improved in quality and implemented since the last inspection, and are planned and adapted appropriately from recommended documentation.
28. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement overall, although a number of areas are still evolving. The Numeracy and Literacy Strategies have been introduced and planning is appropriately drawn from earlier years, reflecting pupils needs. However in English, there is currently no overview to ensure the strands of the programme of study develop on a continuum, and to check the range of texts and writing. However, teachers make good provision for literacy development in subjects across the curriculum, for example they record the steps pupils take in the planning stage when constructing wall hangings in design and technology.
29. Opportunities for curriculum enrichment in lunchtimes and at the end of the school day are good, but are limited by transport arrangements. On Wednesdays there is gymnastics club, dance at lunchtime, and the Youth Club at Victoria School on the same campus makes a valuable regular contribution to pupils' social experiences. In the holidays, older pupils can attend the Birmingham Centre for the Deaf two days a week. Recent opportunities include taking part in Birmingham's year of creative arts (multi-sensory art and batik project), visiting the Birmingham Art Gallery, the Botanical Gardens and Aston Hall where they had opportunities to dress in period costume. They have also performed at Birmingham Hippodrome using BSL in a signed performance.
30. Since the last inspection, a comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education has been implemented. This includes sex education, drug misuse and aspects of citizenship, in addition to the valuable daily 'circle time', which has been extended to include pupils up to seven. The personal, social and health education programme incorporates, where appropriate, visits to places of worship such as a mosque, and to the local fire station. At present it does not incorporate deaf studies, but these are recognised as areas to extend and enhance the programme.
31. Since the last inspection, limited opportunities for regular educational inclusion into a local school have been made available for two pupils, aged eleven. However, although the programme is truly valuable in terms of social interaction and in providing opportunities for these pupils to mix in a larger, busier school, Longwill has yet to promote joint planning to ensure curriculum coverage. For younger pupils, no

individual links are in place but contact with one local school has been made and regular but infrequent visits by the Longwill group are made to that school.

32. The school is aware of, and committed to, the principles of educational inclusion. It has worked hard to forge links with suitable schools so that a greater number of older pupils might attend and study alongside their mainstream peers. However, these plans have not been fulfilled mainly due to factors outside the control of Longwill School. The commitment to inclusion remains strong and whilst staff continue to seek short-term solutions, the long-term plans for the school should result in inclusion being at the heart of its work.
33. Within the school, there are pupils who have a need to develop BSL skills rapidly because they have come to signing later than others; they are usually from homes where English or BSL are not the first language. They are regularly withdrawn from lessons for effective and well focused tuition but, as a result, they miss part of the lessons each time. The work on withdrawal does not take account of the work within class and is a weakness in curriculum planning.
34. The provision within the curriculum for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Moral development is a strength of the school. Opportunities for spiritual development are sometimes missed and it is therefore satisfactory, whilst social and cultural development are good.
35. From the time pupils enter the foundation stage to the time they leave school, their moral and social skills development are central to communication and they permeate the whole ethos of the school. For example 'Bruce and the Spider' – 'if at first you do not succeed, try, try, try again'. Pupils learn to take turns and to be kind to each other through the excellent role models of the adults around in school. They are encouraged to help and respect each other, and empathise with characters in stories. A seven-year-old was encouraged to talk about how a baby owl would feel if it thought its mother would not come back. When on a walk in the grounds, a seven-year-old pupil, seeing a member of the group whose walking frame was stuck, immediately stepped forward to help him. Ten-year-old pupils work together in pairs to discuss and complete tasks in personal and social education lessons. In ICT lessons, pupils work well independently and help each other if they have a problem without being asked by the teacher.
36. Opportunities for cultural development are planned within the subjects of the school and enhanced by visits and visitors to the school. Pupils learn about the work of world artists in their art work, about past cultures in history and make it come alive when they visit Aston Hall and see people dressed in period costume. They visit London and become more aware of the heritage of their own culture. Almost half the pupils are from homes with differing cultural backgrounds, and therefore it is natural to share the festivals of those religions and nationalities. There is good deaf awareness in the work of the school and the provision of signing classes for all draws in a rich cultural mix with common communication goals.
37. Spirituality is insufficiently planned and yet it is good. Pupils' personal spiritual needs are well supported through the school wide system of praise and rewarding achievement, making them glow with pleasure, no matter how small the step in their achievement. For example, pupils gain certificates for their achievements in the graduation from foundation stage to age seven. In lessons sometimes their awareness is raised above the mundane, when, for example, they gasp with appreciation at the achievements of their peers in dance lessons. In a lesson where they were hoping they had guessed correctly how far the Roamer would travel, they are exhalted when they achieve the target. In assemblies, opportunities for

reflection or a quiet prayer are sometimes missed, but in a design and technology lesson pupils are asked to reflect on their work for a moment.

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

38. The staff in this happy school provide good quality care and support for their pupils, aided by the very close home/school ties and the exemplary quality of relationships. The monitoring of behaviour and the prevention of bullying is very good. Procedures for the assessment and the monitoring of pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. However, the use of assessment information to plan the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Attendance monitoring is satisfactory. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good overall, but provision for integration to mainstream schools is unsatisfactory. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety are good.
39. The staff know their pupils and families very well, working tirelessly as a whole-school team, to provide good guidance and support to meet pupils' differing needs. The quality of learning support offered by the teaching assistants, some of whom are deaf themselves, is outstanding. The excellent quality of signing skills used by staff enables pupils, with BSL as their first language, to make good progress not only academically, but also in acquiring English language skills. Pupils who not only use BSL first, but also have their own home language, as well as learning English, make very good progress in learning. They are significantly aided by staff with similar ethnic backgrounds and cultural knowledge.
40. The school has improved its procedures for assessing pupils' work and progress since the last inspection and it is satisfactory overall, but includes some areas for improvement. The school now has a developing system for tracking the gains that pupils make overall in their time at the school. Each subject also, has assessment procedures to identify what pupils have learnt. However, these procedures do not follow a consistent format throughout the school and are not used systematically by each teacher to record in similar detail the pupils' steps of learning. Consequently, the school has some difficulty in identifying the next relevant opportunities for learning in each subject. Individual educational plans are a useful tool in targeting pupils' work according to their needs, However, in some cases the actual tasks are written in general terms and therefore do not identify precisely what the pupil should learn. Where such terms as 'continue to develop', 'extend' or 'practise' are used there is an insufficient focus on the quantity of work to be covered or how the pupil should be taught or supported. Similarly the recording of such targets is sometimes too superficial, is inconsistent between teachers and lacks detail of what has been achieved and what remains to be done.
41. The monitoring of behaviour and prevention of bullying is very good. Pupils are aware of the school rules and generally keep them well. Staff follow the behaviour policy consistently, with emphasis on positive reward. They clearly remind pupils, with firm signing, expression and language, should they misbehave. Clear records are kept of pupils having difficulties in school and individual behaviour plans are used. Parents are fully involved. The school offers them much guidance and/or counselling if pupil behaviour is bad at home, offering new ideas to resolve problems. For any extreme behaviour, intensive support programmes are held in school, with additional access to support from external agencies, if needed. This very good all round attention not only supports family life, but also ensures that there is minimal disruption to pupil learning. No instances of bullying were noted during the inspection. If there are instances of unkind or thoughtless behaviour, staff deal with them quickly and effectively. Pupils are very confident in approaching staff to report any worries, knowing they will receive positive attention.

42. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good. Staff use all informal opportunities very well to develop pupil's positive self-image and confidence. Success is celebrated and pupils helped to overcome any weaknesses. This was seen to very good effect, when a pupil with additional special needs showed dogged determination to replace the cap on a glue stick. The teacher encouraged him and his fellow pupils signed 'well done' and 'congratulations' when he succeeded. The pupil's joy at his achievement was uplifting. There is a good formal programme with 'circle time' discussion groups. Topics such as 'stranger danger' are included. Pupils have a voice in the school through the school council, campaigning on, for example wheelchair ramps and toilet redecoration. Many visits are made to extend pupils' experiences beyond the deaf world. However, for a considerable number of pupils, including those with cochlea implants, mainstream integration into primary and secondary schools is significantly underdeveloped and unsatisfactory, restricting the quality of their personal development. The school has not focused sufficiently on developing planned educational inclusion. This is a weakness in the school's provision.
43. A school policy clearly identifies the roles, responsibilities and procedures for the checking, recording, use and repair of audiological equipment throughout the school. The evidence of the inspection shows that these procedures are given due attention at the beginning of the day. However, during the day when some pupils may forget to switch their aid positions between radio and personal use, or where aids are switched off, this is sometimes not noticed by teachers so that pupils miss auditory learning opportunities.
44. Attendance monitoring is satisfactory. The school has no external support to monitor attendance by an allocated education welfare officer. The office staff keep careful checks on attendance and produce manual weekly figures. The class with the best weekly attendance displays a certificate on the class door. Attendance is generally good, but the number of holidays taken in term time prevents further improvement. The registers used are outdated, with no space to record separate totals of authorised and unauthorised absence, now required. This makes monitoring more difficult and time consuming for office staff. The marking of registers does not meet requirements because too many staff use pencil, and do not consistently enter pupil data in accordance with requirements. Pupils enjoy coming to school and the majority arrive on time. Any lateness is usually due to delays in transport.
45. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. There is a trained designated person, awaiting updated training. Staff receive informal guidance on child protection, but the school knows that this needs formalising. School policy is based on local authority guidance. There is acute awareness that profoundly deaf children may need an external signing 'listener', whom they can trust. The services of the Birmingham Institute for the Deaf are utilised if necessary. Pupils learn in school about keeping safe. Currently, there are no 'looked after' children, but one child is on the 'at risk' register. Sensitive records are kept separately and securely to maintain confidentiality. The school keeps informal notes of any preliminary worries, but cannot request informal advice or guidance from external agencies, without setting formal referral procedures into operation.
46. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory overall. There is an appropriate policy based on local authority guidance. There are very regular fire drills and checks on fire-fighting equipment with good risk assessment of evacuation procedure. However, there is no overall comprehensive system for assessing potential risk and this requires attention, as does health and safety training at management level. There are properly qualified first-aid staff with a small medical room on the ground floor and a treatment area on the upper floor. The accident book is properly kept.

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

47. There is an excellent, shared and vibrant partnership between home and school. Two-way communication and parental access to staff has the highest priority, to ensure that all pupils thrive through ongoing education whether at school or home. Parents have the very highest regard for the work of the school and the commitment of staff to their children.
48. The school considers the support and involvement of parents as vital in developing children's full potential and has established many outstanding initiatives to secure this aim. Parents and family members are able to attend British Sign Language lessons at the Birmingham Institute for the Deaf. Many attend regularly, some having attended for a number of years, not just to gain expertise in signing, but also to enjoy the social aspects of meeting other parents, including a significant number of ethnic minority parents who find that signing helps them to acquire English. Several parents have taken signing exams, speaking very positively about the experience once the exam is over. In many cases these lessons, together with the support of other parents and staff from Longwill and the main receiving specialist deaf secondary school, help parents to come to terms with their children's disability.
49. The extent and provision of home/school liaison is excellent. The home-school officer works in productive and close partnership with a member of senior management to ensure the fullest parental communication and involvement. Much daily contact is by telephone, but parents are always warmly welcomed if they visit. Not only are parents kept informed about their child's progress, but help is also offered if there are any problems affecting pupils' education. Home visits are made for prospective parents and for parents to acquire basic sign language skills through a programme involving many of the Longwill staff in a programme of lessons of one hour a week, over six weeks, before moving on to lessons at the Institute. Visits are made if a parent requests support to manage child behaviour in the home. The active involvement of families with English as an additional language is a very significant strength, with the home-school liaison officer working very successfully to build relationships and trust, so that cultural differences are overcome and viewed very positively, respected and valued by all in the school community.
50. There is a well-established parents' association organising many social and fundraising events, such as the 'Signing Spice Girls', as well as the usual fundraising events like raffles and jumble sales. Events are well attended with transport available to parents.
51. The quality of information provided to parents is satisfactory, overall. Parents receive frequent friendly, good quality newsletters. The school has made good progress in addressing the shortcomings of the prospectus since the last report. However, the governors' annual report to parents does not meet requirements because a large number of required items are not included. The annual academic pupil reports are satisfactory. Reports for older pupils give test results and report all subjects with British Sign Language prominent. However, there is inconsistency in the targets to help pupils improve their learning. Some other comments are too general, or too brief to be useful. Some reports talk of subject coverage, but not about what pupils can and cannot do. Parents have regular formal meetings with staff and can contact staff informally at other times, by visiting the school or telephoning.
52. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning is immeasurable. Many parents have learnt to sign, if it was not an established family practice, and are overjoyed at the quality of communication they are now able to enjoy with their deaf children, so that they are fully able to share learning together. The school holds curriculum events for parents to better understand, for example, numeracy and

literacy. There are home/school books that are valued by parents as a daily means of communication with staff and parents make regular comments. Homework is provided, including reading. Some parents are involved in the school's daily activities, or help on trips.

53. Parents have excellent views of the school. Their children are happy and making good progress. Parents are particularly pleased with the commitment shown by all staff employed at the school and greatly appreciate the positive impact on their children.
54. In most areas relating to parents, the school is an exemplar of good practice and positive role modelling, but there is no complacency, with the school always open to suggestions and new ideas to further enhance the parental partnership. The partnership has improved very well since the last report.

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

55. The leadership and management of the headteacher and two assistant headteachers is good and promotes high standards. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection when some aspects of leadership and management were judged to be unsatisfactory. Leadership is characterised by an energetic, collegiate approach in which all staff, teaching and non-teaching, and all pupils are valued and respected. All members of the senior management team have significant teaching commitments and lead by example in the quality of their teaching and their total commitment to the welfare of pupils in the school.
56. The ethos of the school is excellent, with all members of the school community committed to providing an attractive learning environment, where pupils are cared for, but are expected to work hard and behave properly. Relationships between pupils, and pupils and staff, are excellent and as a result pupils are confident and at ease in the learning situation and make good progress. Equal opportunities are positively addressed in all aspects of school life. The school successfully meets its aim of putting 'children at the heart of the school', in promoting its bilingual philosophy and in its excellent work with parents.
57. Teaching is very effectively monitored and as a result teaching has improved. By contrast with the previous inspection there is no unsatisfactory teaching and most of it is good and very good. A policy for performance management and appraisal has been put in place that involves clear job descriptions for co-ordinators and the setting of performance targets. Progress towards these targets is regularly reviewed. These measures have increased the confidence of the staff and this is reflected in the purposeful and buoyant attitudes they display in carrying out their roles. A strong commitment to succeed pervades the school. The capacity to do so is very good.
58. While the role of subject co-ordinators has been developed and planning of the curriculum is more closely linked to the National Curriculum as recommended by the last inspection, the monitoring of the school curriculum overall remains unsatisfactory. There is not enough rigour at senior management level to ensure that all pupils have appropriate access to all the programmes of study; that sufficient time is allocated to each subject area; that planning and assessment are consistent; and that the impact of withdrawal for BSL training is properly taken into account.
59. The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution to the performance and improvements of the school. Governors are very supportive and the chairman is a regular visitor. Governors are aware of their statutory responsibilities and are conscientious in fulfilling them. For example, there is now provision for the daily act of collective worship, and pupils' annual reviews are occasions when the provision in

their statements of special educational needs is properly re-examined in the light of any progress made. These were weaknesses in the previous inspection. Statutory requirements are now met with the exception of some details in the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents. Along with the headteacher, governors monitor the school development plan and have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. However, the school development plan is not sufficiently detailed in terms of costs, time-scale and personnel to clearly identify priorities, and the absence of success criteria makes it difficult to evaluate the impact of spending on educational outcomes. Governors are over-reliant on information from the headteacher. Systems to evaluate school practices for themselves are underdeveloped.

60. A finance sub-committee of the governors meets regularly and undertakes detailed monitoring of the budget. This is well constructed in response to the indicative figures given by the local education authority. Governors allocate resources in line with priorities identified on the school development plan. An appropriate under-spend accrued by prudent management, is deliberately earmarked to sustain recently improved staffing levels over the next three years or for other contingencies. There are good procedures for the ordering of books, materials and equipment.
61. The school makes very good use of its resources, specific grants and additional funding to improve the quality of education and accommodation. In particular, it makes particularly good use of grants from the 'Lifelong Learning Division' to cover the costs of work with parents, including transport, interpreters, workshops in British Sign Language (BSL), ICT and numeracy. These services are highly valued by parents and increase their ability to contribute to the progress that their children make. The school makes good use of new technologies, including ICT, to enhance the curriculum and to improve and maintain the efficiency of its administration. The school administrative officer sits in on all finance meetings and, along with the local education authority finance officer, provides up-to-date information to the governors and the headteacher to guide their decisions. The high quality of administration allows teachers to focus on their work and supports their endeavours.
62. The school is aware of the principles of best value and applies them wherever possible. In making its spending plans and in its purchases, the school is mindful to ensure that it spends its money wisely and for a planned purpose. It is consolidating a detailed database in order to compare more accurately its costs and performance with that of similar schools. It consults widely on matters of large spending or changes in organisation, for example on the planned 'school within a school' development and on the inclusion opportunities for a few pupils.
63. There is a good match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum, although this involves the headteacher in teaching both music and physical education. In addition, learning support assistants are well deployed to provide effectively for those pupils with additional special needs. A trained technician based in the school gives a very good daily service in repair and maintenance of radio and all ICT equipment within the school. Sign language tutors, who are themselves profoundly deaf, make a very good contribution to teaching pupils signing and in providing positive role models. A notable feature of all staff, including midday assistants, is their ability to communicate competently in BSL. The arrangements for the induction and support of newly appointed staff are unsatisfactory and need to be formalised into a policy and programme. However, the arrangements for staff development are good and identified within the school development plan and through regular meetings with the headteacher.
64. The accommodation is good overall and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The site is attractive and provides good opportunities for play and

physical education. However, the building is suffering from ageing. For example, due to problems with dampness, the audiology room is currently out of use, and any audiological assessment is carried out at hospital. However, this temporary arrangement is compensated for by visiting technicians, who regularly take ear-mould impressions and hearing aids for repair. Thus far, the maintenance and renovation of the school premises has been carried out as far as existing funds permit; eight classrooms for example, have been redecorated. The buildings are clean, well maintained and there is no graffiti or litter. Attractive displays of pupils' work, representing most areas of the curriculum, enhance the school's appearance and give pupils a sense of ownership. Security is very good. There is now an attractive library area, an improvement since the previous inspection, but no dedicated classroom for music. This results in musical instruments being stored in the hall alongside large physical education apparatus and music being taught in the dining room or hall. Access for pupils and adults with physical disabilities to all parts of the building remains difficult and this is a weakness.

65. Resources, other than those for audiology, are good, well targeted and motivate pupils to learn. In particular, there has been a considerable investment in ICT hardware and software, a weakness in the previous inspection, and this is now a strong feature of the school. Literacy and numeracy resources have also benefited from additional funding.
66. However, arrangements for repair and replacement of hearing aids are less good and have a negative impact on pupils' progress. A few pupils from East Birmingham have their own spare aids to use if their own is broken, but the majority of pupils have to share the few spare school aids loaned by the health authority. If pupils leave aids at home, they are left without aids for the day. In some cases the school holds spare moulds for pupils and unless they have spares, they cannot be temporarily fitted to ensure full participation in lessons. The use of sign bilingualism, suggests that it would be appropriate to review policy and practice to improve the assessment of listening for speech and best listening levels for what pupils are capable of hearing and a review of the use of radio hearing aids. The current arrangements are unsatisfactory because the manager, who also teaches a full timetable, has no discrete budget from school or local education authority, insufficient time and few resources to monitor audiology across the school. The school is aware of the need to review its practice in the wake of new initiatives such as visual phonics and to audit its current resources.
67. The school has made good improvements overall, in addressing the key issues of the previous inspection. It is now an effective school, offering a good quality of education to all its pupils. All this has been achieved at reasonable financial cost. As a consequence, the school now provides good value for money, a further improvement on the previous inspection.

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

68. In order to raise standards further the headteacher, senior management team and governors should:
  - a) Improve arrangements for pupils to attend mainstream schools by:
    - i. developing criteria to identify all the pupils who would benefit from part-time attendance in mainstream schools;
    - ii. seeking suitable placement for those pupils and identify suitable subjects for them to study;
    - iii. assessing and recording each pupil's progress and experience; and



iv. monitoring and recording the effectiveness of each placement.

*(Para refs: 31, 32, 38, 42)*

b) Improve the provision and standards of audiology by:

i. increasing the time available for the management of audiology;

ii. auditing, assessing and improving facilities and resources (including hearing aids);

iii. making use of all relevant systems to support the sign/bilingual initiative; and

iv. ensuring there are sufficient standby/replacement hearing aids and other equipment should pupils need them.

*(Para refs: 43, 64, 66)*

c) Improve the system for identifying the strengths and weakness of the curriculum by:

i. requiring that each subject co-ordinator uses consistent strategies to identify the work covered in each subject and its effectiveness in promoting pupils' learning;

ii. introducing a rigorous and regular checking system which is implemented by senior managers to audit whole-school curricular provision; and

iii. sharing the model of good practice that already exists in some subjects such as information and communication technology.

*(Para refs: 28, 33, 58, 95, 139)*

69. Other less important issues which the headteacher and governors should address:
- a) introduce consistent whole-school procedures for assessing pupils' gains in learning in all subjects and record all steps of learning achieved by the pupils; *(Para refs: 40, 78, 93, 104, 117, 143, 150, 153)*
  - b) ensure that the governors' annual report to parents meets statutory requirements; *(Para refs: 51, 59)*
  - c) formalise the support given to new members of staff by introducing a policy and strategies for recording all steps of the induction process; *(Para ref: 63)*
  - d) improve the school's development planning, including time-scales, costs, personnel and criteria for success, written in measurable terms. Record progress towards and completion of each target with supporting evidence of success; *and (Para ref: 58)*
  - e) review and revise the allocation of time to religious education and implement a scheme of work which indicates when particular topics/themes will be taught, in what order and by whom. *(Para ref: 153)*

## **OTHER PROVISION**

### **BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE**

70. The school's provision for British Sign Language (BSL) is very good, especially relating to the teaching of pupils, their families, and the whole staff at the school. Although the pupils' first language is BSL, the school is providing a new approach to developing English literacy skills through its sign-bilingual policy. Sign bilingualism is helping to develop skills in reading and writing in English through the delivery of the National Literacy Strategy. The school is also recognising the need of an increasing number of pupils who have received cochlea implants.
71. The school makes very good practical provision for all pupils who enter the school, from deaf and hearing families, almost half of whom have parents whose first language is not English. These pupils often enter school late and have minimal communication skills.
72. Pupils with cochlea implants develop their signing skills and at the same time improve their spoken language. BSL tutors work hard with pupils from homes where English is not the first language and parents are also fully involved in learning to sign themselves which has a very positive effect on supporting pupils' language development at home. Support with signing and story telling by deaf assistants in class provides high status role models and a high standard of signing for teachers and pupils alike.
73. There is a good policy and well-planned programme of study, with a key focus on skills and a well thought through programme of study, which meets the needs of individuals, whatever their background. Records are kept highlighting achievement and needs and school assessment is in place and used to record ongoing progress. A test of receptive skills has recently been introduced but is not yet fully implemented and targets for BSL skills are not yet set.
74. Pupils' achievements at the end of the primary phase are good or very good, depending on their knowledge of BSL prior to entering school and the age of their entry. By the age of seven, the higher attaining pupils from deaf families are relating their own experiences in detail and, in discussion, predicting what might happen in a story. Lower attaining pupils or new learners have fewer signs to 'speak' at length

but are confident to give brief responses. Throughout pupils are always praised for their achievements and encouraged to extend their language. Eleven-year-old higher attainers recognise and sometimes use role play within their conversation or discussion and those higher level skills are constantly honed and improved increasing pupils' understanding of subtleties that enrich expressive BSL.

75. The quality of the teaching and learning opportunities in both key stages and for the foundation stage results in pupils' very good level of achievement. Most pupils who have attended the foundation stage make very good progress in communication skills, whilst pupils with additional learning difficulties, linguistic or physical, make at least good progress. Most new entrants make rapid progress and have additional one-to-one sessions where teaching is of a consistently high quality. However, withdrawal sessions, however brief, can mean that pupils miss parts of lessons and planning does not link into the key language content of lessons, missing opportunities to support and prepare pupils for language they will need. For example, pupils needed key vocabulary for hazards in the home but the individual sign language support was not related.
76. All staff have at least CACDP (Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People) Stage 1 in signing, but most have much higher levels of skills which they use fluently in their teaching, although some teachers use more speech with sign than others which is helpful in developing the language of pupils with cochlea implants. Where a new teacher enters the school without skills, they are supported by a signing special needs support assistant who supports them through the school day ensuring rapid acquisition and practise of skills. At lunchtimes, dinner ladies sign proficiently to pupils, which helps to reinforce pupils' confidence in communication in different situations.
77. The school provides very good links through the Internet buddy system for pupils to make friends with the buddies with whom they correspond by e-mail. Through social events organised by Friends of the Young Deaf, pupils come to know their older peers who attend Braidwood Secondary School for the Deaf. Links with the secondary school are strong. Pupils have opportunities to visit and try out the lessons and teachers visit Longwill School.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	32	47	18	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	53
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	30

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	8.7	School data	0.4

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

There were too few pupils to report national curriculum results formally but by the age of seven:

Pupils working at	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
English	1			
Mathematics	4			
Science	2	2		

By the age of eleven:

Pupils working at	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
English	4	1	1	1
Mathematics		6	1	1
Science		7		2

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	17
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	0
White	25
Any other minority ethnic group	3

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.3
Average class size	6.5

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

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	771,734
Total expenditure	789,098
Expenditure per pupil	14,889
Balance brought forward from previous year	56,954
Balance carried forward to next year	69,590

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	53
Number of questionnaires returned	24

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	92	4	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	88	13	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	33	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	50	4	0	0
The teaching is good.	88	13	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	63	33	4	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	29	4	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.	58	42	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	63	33	0	4	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	38	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	71	21	4	4	0

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents have excellent views of the school and appreciate the way the school is committed to providing very high levels of support for them in terms of signing classes, translators and interpreters. They know their children are happy and making good progress and are also pleased with improvements in their behaviour, many parents having been helped with their own strategies for managing their children's behaviour at home. Parents are particularly pleased with the commitment shown by all staff and are convinced that the school provides very high quality education. Parents of children under five feel that they, and their children, are very well supported as they experience school life for the first time. Parents feel comfortable in approaching the school, knowing that any difficulties are resolved quickly. The school continues to improve its relationship with parents and has built upon the high standards found at the last inspection.

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

78. During the inspection there were four girls and ten boys under five attending the nursery and reception classes. There are no part-time pupils. The school has built upon the high standards found at the last inspection with good teaching in almost half of lessons, very good or outstanding teaching in almost half with one single lesson being satisfactory. In the very best teaching children are able to work independently, behave very well and enjoy taking part in a wide variety of activities all of which are well matched to their needs and interests. As a result the children quickly gain in confidence and ability and by the age of five are ready to enter the first year of formal education. Their communication skills are then sufficiently well developed to support their learning in all the subjects of the National Curriculum. The high quality teaching and the good gains children make in their learning are consistent in all subject areas with no significant differences between the achievements of boys or girls or for those from different language backgrounds. The school has successfully put into place the latest curriculum requirements for the foundation stage and has introduced assessment strategies that identify clear pathways for learning. The co-ordinator is currently seeking ways to identify more clearly the progress made by pupils in order to gather data on the children's overall success and achievements and staff are currently seeking to improve the ways in which they identify the strengths and weaknesses of their work. The determination to strive for higher standards typifies the commitment of the early years staff, and the children's parents and demonstrates their overall interest in the world of the deaf.

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

79. In personal, social and educational development many children are just beginning to acquire socialisation skills and are successfully making the transition from home to school. Skilled teaching helps them to relate to adults and each other and, as a result, they are learning to take turns which sometimes involves waiting. Staff are very vigilant and observe the children carefully so that they can comment on their activities and relationships and provide parents and carers with detailed examples of their activities.
80. A major strength in personal and social education is the independence that many children show. When they need help with a task they are quick to ask but all are able to do some tasks unaided. For example, they pick up items from the floor without being asked or choose which book they would like to look at.
81. Promoting high standards of communication is fundamental to the department's work because very skilled teaching and support enables the children to communicate very well. They are taught BSL with the parents' knowledge and agreement. The youngest pupils confidently sign 'want glue' or 'drink' but very soon learn to add the 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff provide excellent role models. Teachers and support assistants all sign very well with confidence and competence. They use their skills very well to challenge and extend the children's responses by asking them 'how' they did things or 'why' they like something. All staff are conscious of the difficulties experienced by deaf children and they try hard to compensate for this by flooding them with language and opportunities whenever they can. For example, the staff say what they like in circle time and expect children to do the same. This simple strategy helps children to define their ideas and begin to justify the underlying reasons for their choices.

82. The environment in all the areas of the department promotes interest and learning. There are many pictures and illustrations which link with work the children are currently studying and many opportunities for them to increase their sense of identity by seeing their names on rotas and timetables. Teachers use these well to help pupils understand the passage of time during the day so that they know when to expect playtime, lunch or home time.

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

83. Foundation stage classrooms provide a language-rich source for the children's development of communication, English and literacy. All displays included relevant text as labelling or explanation. There are many opportunities for children to interact with a display by searching for a word, character or their own name. The staff have many examples of printed materials near to hand which the children can pick up and examine. Literacy sessions are well planned and provide all children with opportunities to improve their listening skills and understand how books work and how illustrations support narrative. Nursery age children follow the text as the adult reads and sign key words when prompted. By the time they are approaching a move to the next class they clearly understand that each sign represents a group of letters which equals a word. These older children follow the text as the teacher points, or sign the word when prompted if necessary, by the teacher or an adult in the classroom. Few are yet able to read the actual words from the text such as 'owl' or 'swooped' but they copy the teacher carefully and increase their signing vocabulary. These opportunities for working with words provide children with good opportunities for developing the very earliest stages of reading. Children respond very well to these opportunities and can sometimes be seen rehearsing quietly the events of a story they have been told.

### **Mathematical development**

84. Higher attaining children can count to over 20 and often practise use of numbers when counting the beads as they thread them or counting the number of flowers in a vase. All staff are rigorous in ensuring that pupils understand the relationship between the sign for '2' (the numeric symbol) and '2' objects and they reinforce these concepts at every opportunity. Pupils sign their numbers very well and they often compare their sign with others to check the accuracy of their work.
85. In a sequencing activity children showed that they understood the sequence of the days of the week by putting their labels in order and sticking them on an attractive cardboard figure. This simple, yet motivating activity, gave pupils the opportunity to practise this sequence in sign and, for one child with improved hearing, through the medium of speech.
86. All children are developing a good sense of shape and can name common shapes such as circle and triangle regularly because teachers use every opportunity to reinforce their understanding. During a visit to Lickey Park, staff encouraged the children to identify shapes in the landscape, to predict which shape they might find next and to identify whichever one the teacher named. This strategy is a very good example of using natural resources within the environment as a spur to learning. Most children know the names of all the colours and are therefore able to use this knowledge when colouring and painting on pages on the computer.
87. By the time they reach the last term of reception, children approaching five explain their work through sign, increasingly show they can make comparisons between other children's work and their own pointing out the similarities and differences, for example in colour or shape. This helps the children to share their ideas with others and to express their ideas with confidence.



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

88. In their knowledge and understanding of the world children experience a wide range of opportunities and make good progress overall. The children's abilities in information and communication technology are well advanced. All enjoy using the computer and most can fill in a predetermined shape using a 'paint' programme. The children's interests and abilities vary – some choose colours very carefully, whilst others overpaint the outlines and take great pleasure in showing adults that they have done it. Some higher attaining pupils or older children can select the letters of their name to label their work independently. Children play with a range of materials and construct models and use different media such as paint, paste, crayon and pencil. They use scissors with care to cut around shapes and one child, after cutting the duck's beak off accidentally, then announced ' . . . but it's alright because it can still fly,' thus illustrating his understanding of its method of moving around.

## **Physical development**

89. Children develop their physical skills very well in formal lessons and during opportunities for play within their own play area. Within the outside area they use large toys and cars to develop their motor skills but also to practise stopping and starting when the lights change from green to red. The staff, who act both as the traffic lights and as the pedestrians wishing to cross, provide these opportunities. Their dramatic acting and exaggerated movements cause great hilarity amongst the children and their playtime becomes an enjoyable learning experience. They also enjoy moving around play equipment and investigating how to use a range of apparatus. During trips out of school their physical endurance is appropriately challenged when, for example they go on a visit to the nature trail at Lickey Hills. They are so energetic during this visit that by the end of the morning they are exhausted, but have thoroughly enjoyed using their energy to search for treasure at the end of the trail and have been rewarded by finding a mini teddy bear or sweets in a bag. The good planning and commitment of the staff is illustrated by the fact that the teacher had arrived at 7.00 am to prepare the hunt, put numbers on the trees and hide the treasure. Such opportunities broaden the children's experience physically and mentally, as they try to spot their own houses in the distance. The curriculum also provides good opportunities for children to gain confidence in the water and begin to swim but it was not possible to see this during the inspection. Within the classroom, teachers plan other effective activities to challenge children's thinking and physical effort, for example a group of children joined in with their parents to respond to a drum beat, standing up, sitting down or turning around, depending on the number of times the teacher struck the drum. Overall children's progress is good; they respond well because they enjoy the activities as they are well planned and motivating.

## **Creative development**

90. Staff plan many good opportunities for children to develop their creativity, using a range of materials such as glue sticks, scissors and paper. They stick labels representing days of the week in sequence. This is an interesting activity and children are excited by getting their hands sticky but producing a relevant model. At various points of the day children sing action songs such as 'the wheels on the bus', matching their actions to the words and then answering questions the teacher has skilfully compiled about their bus journeys to and from school. Teachers encourage children to make good use of the computer and they create pictures using a painting program either by following the instructions provided or by creating their own.
91. The provision for children under five is a strength of the school. The staff are highly skilled and responsive to meeting the children's needs and make every effort to involve them in their learning. One highlight of the inspection week was to observe

the levels of self-confidence and pleasure displayed by the children in their 'graduation' ceremony. They showed pride when they clasped their certificates which had been skilfully designed to identify precise targets that the children had achieved. The parents took great pride in acknowledging the progress made by their children and later saw the younger children apply what they had learnt when they worked alongside their new teacher for September in their new class bases. The high standards achieved by the children under five demonstrates a significant improvement since the last inspection and results from higher quality teaching, clear planning for individual needs and a consistent approach to developing pupils' communication and language skills so that they are effective learners. The school is aware that its assessment procedures, whilst good, could be adapted to provide more systematic identification of children's progress and therefore enable better planning for the future.

## ENGLISH

92. Standards of attainment are below national expectations for pupils of this age range. However, the school's provision for English is good overall and the teaching of communication skills is very good. Since the last inspection the school has made good improvements, notably through the successful introduction of the literacy strategy and the grouping of pupils aged seven to eleven according to ability for English lessons. Work in sign bilingualism to support language development and reading is proving very effective in promoting communication, and aspects of assessment have also improved opportunities to identify what pupils have learnt. The quality of teaching is good and is now well monitored by the school, particularly by classroom observation. All staff are aware of the importance of promoting the pupils' use of literacy throughout other subjects and they make good use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support this work.
93. Pupils' achievement in English is good overall across the school although compared to their hearing peers, it is considerably below national standards. However, the levels of pupils' receptive and expressive language skills using British Sign Language (BSL) is very good and in line with mainstream pupils if compared in terms of speaking and listening. Pupils who enter the school with a home language other than English or BSL, have intensive teaching to assist communication, and their parents have weekly classes in BSL, so that all share a common and accessible language. Where BSL is the home language, pupils as young as seven have a good receptive and expressive vocabulary, fluent signing skills in both BSL and sign supported English (SSE). Older pupils' skills continue to improve as they broaden their language to include word endings. Pupils improve the quality of their signed expression, such as understanding and adopting the roles of contrasting speakers for example, or identifying a child and an adult in conversation. Pupils with cochlea implants and usable hearing have aural-oral stimuli in set situations or with particular groups. They make good progress in their language development and reading skills, although such pupils' progress in expressive language would be better focused through more precise targets in their individual education plans.
94. Pupils make good progress in developing reading skills. Since the introduction of the literacy strategy, achievement in reading has risen and most higher achieving pupils make a year's progress over the same period. By the age of seven, pupils are reading together in sign, accompanied with speech from Big Book 'Baby Owls', higher achievers reading every word. Younger pupils have a sight vocabulary and are learning visual phonic strategies. Seven-year-old pupils, for example, work enthusiastically to read the story of 'The Tiger Who Came To Tea' individually, with the special needs support assistant (SSA), or in pairs reading independently. Pupils use visual phonic skills to sound new words. By the age of eleven, the higher achieving pupils are reading from *Harry Potter* books and enjoying the story line,

although they are not yet able to draw from inference or discuss characters in depth. They are able to make sensible suggestions about what might happen to poachers, when reading as a group about 'Amazing Animal Facts', suggesting that 'poachers might get stuck in the mud'. They know to whom 'they' refers in the text, but place too narrow an interpretation on 'diet'. There is a good ethos for reading individually, and pupils take books home to read to parents which encourages pupils to read at home and helps them to make progress.

95. Pupils' achievement in writing skills is satisfactory overall and adults promote very good support for literacy particularly with the use of ICT for all pupils when, for example, they have fun with an ICT spelling program to find the errors in past tenses of verbs. Six-year-olds work together on the electronic screen to prepare a fax message for their 'fax buddy'. They ask questions about their fax buddy and learn to recognise and use question marks. By the age of seven, higher attaining pupils write simple repetitive sentences, often writing from their own experiences. Together they use the photographs of their visit to Kidderminster train museum to compose sentences such as 'We saw the man making the fire'. Eight-year-olds use sign graphics and picture dictionaries to find vocabulary for their weekend diaries. Lower attaining pupils write simple sentences with support, whilst higher attaining pupils write independent accounts even though some sentences are incomplete, or in BSL order. Spelling is generally accurate, and spelling homework is regularly set. For example Year 5 spell words like 'careful' and 'sensible,' and take pride in scoring highly in weekly spelling tests.
96. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and now ranges from satisfactory to very good, with examples of very good teaching at both key stages. This is an improvement on the last inspection when some unsatisfactory teaching was seen and the best teaching was good. In the eight lessons seen, two were satisfactory, four were good, and two were very good. Features of the best teaching are the teaching of the basic skills especially in reading and communication. The teamwork of special needs support assistants, sign language tutors and teachers contribute effectively to very good relationships, concentration and the positive attitudes of the pupils. Clear achievable learning objectives, good pace to the lesson and very good relationships promote very good learning and concentration. Learning objectives are shared and reviewed at the end of the lesson and key vocabulary well reinforced throughout the lesson. Where the teaching is no more than satisfactory, pupils had too much time on one activity with insufficient variety of tasks so that they quickly lost concentration. When new vocabulary was introduced, teachers failed to present it in a multi-sensory way, so that their memory of the new words was from a fleeting finger spelled pattern. The new words were not used, and reviewed during, or at the end of, the lesson. However, teachers were alert to pupils' misunderstandings or narrow interpretations of language and overall taught good quality lessons which helped pupils to make good gains in learning.
97. Literacy is well promoted in other subjects of the curriculum, for example, in personal and social education and circle time, pupils read together from texts, and discuss and explain to others about dangers in the home. They say that the 'Ladder might shake when they climb it' and that 'The boy might fall'. They suggest the use of goggles to make safe the use of an electric saw. In ICT they add to their vocabulary the terms that they need to know such as 'mouse', 'file', 'print', 'fax', 'enter', 'close', 'shut down' and 'create'. They compose and send faxes and e-mails. In design and technology, pupils record the planning for their projects and discuss and write simple evaluations of their work. Following a visit to London they write at length as a group about their experiences on the visit, linking cultural, spiritual and social awareness with aspects of time.

98. The curriculum managers have worked very hard to put the literacy strategy in place and to ensure parents are aware of the initiative. Since the introduction of the strategy, pupils have been set in ability groups throughout the school, according to reading and writing skills. This setting is being refined to take more account of oral skills, and reading of words, using phonic skills. The use of a 'Sign Graphics' program for BSL vocabulary within a good range of topics, provides a useful reference and teaching tool which supports language development by prominent displays in classrooms. The policy and practice are now lodged firmly within the programmes of study for younger age groups. At the moment there is no overview to check the range of pupils' learning experiences across the age range. The necessity to plan to ensure different texts for pupils who stay in the same class over two years, is recognised. However, the range of writing is too narrow, and although there has been a good focus on grammar and usage, there is a need to focus more on word order, sentence construction, and extending vocabulary. The suitable policy for English is in draft form as it was at the time of the last inspection, although this is a new draft, which includes the new initiatives. The action plan for English shows that planned initiatives are appropriate. However, the school recognises the need to consolidate and refine all the new initiatives it has introduced.
99. Assessment procedures used in lessons in English are good overall. Recently assessment results from statutory and optional national tests are being recorded on 'Hafgraphs' which clearly show progress of pupils over time from P-levels to National Curriculum levels. Progress in reading is better than in writing for all pupils and results show a surge in progress in Years 1 and 2 and in particular for pupils in their last year at the school. Day-to-day recording of learning is informal. A progress portfolio for each pupil holds annotated work samples and results of assessments in reading, writing and speaking and listening. Assessment in BSL will be added from September using test results of receptive language skills, devised by an external institution.
100. The library is a spacious, well-equipped facility which is used regularly by classes as timetabled, but is not well used by individual pupils. There is a good range of books, some of which are rather shabby. However, pupils make good use of the sign graphics books as a reference facility. And higher achieving pupils know how to use reference texts even though they may be unsure of the specialist research vocabulary.

## **MATHEMATICS**

101. Overall standards of attainment are below national expectations for pupils of this age range. Nevertheless they make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons and over time. This is because teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes good and because the school has successfully adapted and implemented the National Numeracy Strategy, along with a good range of resources. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection when a significant amount of pupils' progress and teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory.
102. Pupils up to the age of seven, make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in acquiring the technical vocabulary of mathematics and in understanding number and algebra. They count in tens up to 100 and fill in missing numbers on a magnetic number board. They are beginning to understand the place value of each digit in a number and use this to order numbers up to a hundred. They are using mathematics as a normal part of classroom activity. For example they recall events from yesterday when they planted seeds in science, and identify the size, colour and names of seeds. They produce a simple block graph and discuss and interpret their findings. The lesson is well planned and structured so that learning is continuous. Good questioning by the teacher, for example, 'Who planted green peppers?' and 'How

many seeds did you plant?’ confirms learning and challenges pupils to think. The teacher and learning support assistant provide good role models of kind considerate behaviour. This is particularly important as an example to one disruptive pupil, who they deal with patiently, and maintain on task. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject and this enhances their learning. They maintain their concentration for very long periods and take care over their work. A good plenary activity reinforcing previous learning on shape, using a ‘feely’ bag and flashcards to recognise the geometrical shapes like a triangle and hexagon. One weakness in teaching is the lack of work suitable to challenge higher attaining pupils so that they are continually extended when working.

103. Pupils up to the age of eleven, continue to build on this firm foundation and make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in improving their oral (signing) and mental calculation skills and on their knowledge and understanding of number and algebra. Teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes good. Good use is made of speech and fingers to enable pupils to understand the task and develop their mathematical skills. Key words are emphasised to help pupils identify and add coins. Learning support assistants are invaluable during the oral work and mental calculation part of the lesson by being the ‘eyes and ears’ of the teacher and spotting responses from pupils that the teacher might miss. In another group, which includes a pupil from the physical disability special school next door, pupils make satisfactory progress in collecting, organising, presenting and interpreting data from an investigation involving rolling dice. The teacher checks to see if pupils understand how to test a hypothesis from the frequency of an event by asking relevant questions, for example, ‘Which number was rolled the most?’ and ‘What do you think would happen if we rolled the dice 20 more times’. Pupils are confident in responding, knowing that all their contributions are valued by the teacher and their peers. Pupils’ attitudes and behaviour are good throughout and this contributes to the progress they make. Lower attaining pupils are well supported by learning support assistants. Higher attaining pupils work independently but are not given extension work. The length of the lesson is too long (90 minutes), and this should be reviewed. As a consequence, the pace of teaching and learning is difficult to maintain. One pupil who arrived late to the lesson in the first place, is then withdrawn for BSL training, and makes minimal progress.
104. The subject is satisfactorily led by an experienced teacher who has attended relevant National Numeracy training, but the cross-curricular impact of the National Numeracy Strategy is not yet as effectively promoted in all subjects as well as literacy. There is a good scheme of work in place with medium and short-term planning but day-to-day assessment procedures are underdeveloped. The subject makes a good contribution to other subjects, but particularly literacy and science. A scrutiny of pupils’ work shows there is a balanced coverage of all the attainment targets and that ICT and investigative work are increasingly a feature. There is positive evidence that one higher attaining pupil who is attaining in line with national expectations is being given suitably challenging work. There is evidence too, of homework extending and consolidating pupils’ progress. The school has made effective use of organising ‘ability sets’ for pupils aged seven to eleven, so that planning is easier and the attainment gap in a group is not too wide. However, this should not be seen as an alternative to challenging all pupils at an appropriate level. There are no obvious differences in the standards reached by different ethnic groups. Numeracy lessons have been monitored by the headteacher and local education authority adviser and this has contributed to improvements in this subject. Resources are good, are well used and motivate pupils to learn. The subject has made good improvements since the previous inspection and is well placed to improve still further.

## SCIENCE

105. The standards of attainment overall in science are below national expectations. However, the attainment of a few pupils at seven and eleven years of age match national expectations. While it was only possible to see three science lessons, it is clear from these observations, and the examination of the pupils' work and teachers' records, that the school provides good learning opportunities and good teaching. Of the lessons observed two were good and one very good and each lesson helped pupils to increase their understanding of the subject through well-planned practical work.
106. Teachers enable pupils to make good gains in learning in science by using a practical approach with a range of activities that enable them to understand both experiments and theories. The teachers showed pupils aged five and six, for example, that holding a baby required much care. The pupils paid very good attention and enjoyed watching the teacher's demonstrations. The teachers put a strong emphasis on the language of science and reinforce the relevant vocabulary and, as a result, the pupils sign, repeat and understand words such as 'bottle', 'nappies' and 'bathing'. By seven years of age, pupils have learnt how a fruit provides seed to enable reproduction and learnt the name of each fruit, its smell and taste. Pupils aged eight go on to investigate shadows. They quickly learnt how shadows change in relation to the position of the light source. Their behaviour was impeccable as they at first watched the teacher using the overhead projector to create each shadow and then went on to make their own, displaying their ideas in front of the class. These motivating activities are typical of the range planned by teachers and the way pupils' learning is reinforced and checked by regular and probing questions. The pupils therefore understand what they have learnt and this boosts their self-esteem.
107. Teachers ensure that they maximise the links between science and other areas of the curriculum, for example between design and technology and geography by emphasising the relationships whenever possible. For example, when working on a water project, lessons also covered the environment and therefore linked with the pupils' work in geography. The project on electricity also covered aspects of design and technology in making circuits and switches. The teaching of key vocabulary through spoken and written English as well as sign ensures that all pupils understand the specific language of science. These extra dimensions added to the subject ensure that pupils understand the application of science in its wider context.
108. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the work and are able to answer pupils' queries with confidence. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to the subject. They have a good range of resources available which they use regularly and effectively in classes to support the pupils' learning and understanding. All adults work well together as a team, their relationships with the pupils are excellent and they praise and encourage the pupils, particularly in terms of undertaking tasks on their own whenever they can. This helps the pupils become more independent as they are expected to attempt to work out the solution to tasks on their own before requesting help.
109. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that their achievements over time are good and cover the wide range of topics identified in the school's schemes of work. These include learning parts of the body, the use of electricity and elements that can change the speed of a car. Pupils present their work well and include good illustrations by sketches or diagrams of the work they have undertaken. Teachers add supportive comments that help pupils to see how well they have achieved. The pupils' achievements show very good improvement over time and this year, for the first time, six out of seven pupils achieved National Curriculum Level 4. The co-ordinator

has close links with two other deaf schools using BSL and is developing a system for gathering data on the achievement of profoundly deaf pupils using BSL – a strategy that should help the school identify overall progress in the subject.

110. Teaching is consistently well planned and the active style of teaching and learning represents an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was no more than satisfactory in almost half of lessons seen. The school now has a good science policy which defines the purposes and practice of science teaching throughout the school. The new scheme of work is also an improvement and provides a systematic ladder of learning to the age of eleven. The school has also increased the time available for science and linked the work closely to the new National Curriculum requirements.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

111. From limited evidence pupils' attainment in art is judged to be below national expectations. During the inspection, because of timetable arrangements, it was possible to see only one lesson of art, which was with five to six-year-old pupils. However, from evidence of work on display, the lesson observation and discussion with teachers it is clear that the provision of art is satisfactory and contributes positively to pupils' education overall. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the quality of teaching and learning. It is not possible to make a judgement about the progress of pupils. This finding coincides with reporting at the time of the last inspection.
112. Staff prepare and use a wide range of resources to support the pupils' learning and they explore the use of information and communication technology (ICT) with enthusiasm. They create designs for wrapping paper, incorporate images of themselves into fabric printing, create greetings cards and illustrate calendars. As a result pupils achieve well and make satisfactory progress.
113. Since the last inspection, the programmes of study have been improved and now follow the latest guidelines, which ensures that the school covers the National Curriculum requirements. However, because the curriculum is still in the early stages of development it is not yet possible for the school to identify with certainty the range of experience of materials in two and three dimensions that has been covered by the pupils.
114. All pupils in the school are well motivated by the use of computer graphics, for example to choose facial features and compose photo-fit self-images. Their independence in the use of computers is outstanding and the highest attaining pupils make good choices of colour and shape when 'painting' on the screen and combine text and graphics when they send e-mails and fax messages.
115. All pupils show a genuine interest in the subject, try hard and behave well. They want to do their best and by the age of seven, pupils work from personal observation of nature during a visit to the Birmingham botanical gardens. They draw individual flowers in chalk, showing that they have looked carefully at the plant to produce the correct leaf shapes and overall plant shape. They show progress in their drawing skills by the age of nine; they have made studies of historic buildings in Birmingham and their notebooks show detail of Tudor buildings and an awareness of proportion. By the age of eleven in the study of the work of Dahli, they have copied line and shape and are aware of the importance of positioning within the frame of the picture
116. There are also strong links with other subjects such as literacy, religious education and history, because pupils are encouraged to illustrate the work that they produce. For example, most pupils produce very carefully drawn illustrations when working on

'the story of Moses'. Ten-year-old pupils have studied movement in the art of great artists such as Hockney and Lowry and produce a montage of moving animals, which they draw and paint. Eleven-year-olds have good control of fine brushes and knowledge and understanding of mixing paint when they copy and develop their own versions of Salvador Dali's surrealist work, 'Soft self-portrait with fried bacon'.

117. At present, the curriculum co-ordinator is managing the subject, in the absence of a subject manager. Since the time of the last inspection, monitoring of teachers' plans and of teaching has increased. Whilst teachers carry out end-of-topic assessment the school has yet to put in place a system for clearly identifying the pupils' development of skills in art, for example in three-dimensional work, graphics, painting and printing. As at the time of the last inspection, there are no portfolios of work, although these are gradually being compiled throughout the school and there is no special room currently in use for art. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, but procedures for assessment do not fully identify all that staff and parents wish to know.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

118. Pupils' attainment in design and technology is below national expectations. Nevertheless, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their own skills and independence and to produce original designs. Teacher knowledge is good but teachers also realise the importance of letting pupils make their own choices and, maybe sometimes, their own mistakes. The quality of teaching is good, teachers are confident and plan good, practical tasks which pupils enjoy and which motivate them to do well. In food technology pupils are particularly well motivated by the finished food as a reward. They learnt the names of the different fruit and described them before using knives to cut pieces into a fruit salad. The teacher encouraged discussion about the task and the group work made a significant contribution to the pupils' social interactions.
119. Pupils aged ten are able to design a pattern for a wall-hanging in textiles and they plan several designs before evaluating and finally choosing those that they prefer. The range of work has improved well since the last inspection partly due to this exciting and challenging, extensive, practical work. Learning support assistants also make a significant contribution to the standards of work achieved by pupils. Pupils are presented with lessons that progressively help them to build their skills and improve their control of materials, tools and techniques. As a result they use a variety of equipment and materials with increasing confidence. Teachers are vigilant in paying very good attention to health and safety so that pupils' well being is assured.
120. The school has developed a good policy and a scheme of work that promotes skills and enables the pupils to develop independent learning skills of design and making. Pupils' work shows that they have studied a wide and relevant variety of topics including model cardboard houses, cars, lorries, trains and puppets from differing periods of history. These are displayed on the window with curtains, as in the case of a real puppet show. Pupils have worked effectively with two-dimensional shapes such as triangles, squares, rectangles, pentagons, hexagons and circles. Over time the pupils' finished work shows an increased level of care in design and execution. All lessons are accompanied by some formal work, which effectively reinforces pupils' drawing and writing and, although pupils' achievements are well developed in the latter, this work helps them understand the importance of recording their efforts.
121. Teaching overall is good for all pupils and they behave very well, understanding that health and safety issues are important. They handle tools and other instruments safely and pay good attention to the staff. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and



effectively promotes the development of the subject throughout the school. In this way design and technology has a high priority in the teaching of many subjects in the school, for example in history, the lesson on the Romans included making models of their homes and fortresses. The co-ordinator has made extensive guidelines for the teachers to follow in their class and this has an impact on the teaching and learning of the subject. She has also improved the assessment of pupils' work using various techniques like photographs to mark or judge the quality of pupils' work. Good records are kept and these are used to plan future lessons and to modify where necessary the scheme of work. There is, however, a lack of opportunity to monitor the teaching by the co-ordinator, but assessment overall is satisfactory.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

122. Pupils' attainment in geography is below national expectations. It was only possible to observe two geography lessons during the inspection, therefore, judgements are also drawn from the teachers' planning and pupils' work. Teachers plan a good series of lessons for the development of pupils' learning over time. Pupils aged five to seven have studied the local amenities and familiarised themselves with such places as the shops, the play area and the park. Older pupils have built upon this experience by learning about the origin of food, and they know that their banana comes from the West Indies and can locate this on the map. Pupils' achievements are good and result in the majority reaching Level 2 by the age of eleven, with one reaching Level 3 and one Level 4. Whilst the results are still below those expected in mainstream schools, in the light of the pupils' difficulties with language and deafness, they represent good progress.
123. The school has a good geography policy and scheme of work, which seeks to develop pupils' interest in the environment and the world around them with priority given to aspects of most relevance to the pupils' first-hand experiences. Pupils of all abilities therefore, achieve a good understanding of the world and by the age of seven, understand through these local visits to the various places of interest, how to travel there, how far they are from school and home. In workbooks pupils aged eleven show increasing skills in map drawing and interpreting symbols. Their writing shows an appropriate understanding of the difference between areas of the town and community facilities.
124. In the two lessons observed with pupils aged ten and eleven they made good progress. Pupils learned very well. Good, highly structured teaching enabled pupils to recall, in a sensible sequence, what they had seen on their visit to Bradford on Avon. Several pupils spontaneously explained how locks work and all remembered and described shops, public houses, chemist and post office. In addition to stimulating the pupils' interest in the environment, the discussion generated ideas concerning other curriculum areas such as the scientific understanding of the importance of locks and how they work. Within a language rich environment the pupils also expanded their understanding and use of a range of relevant vocabulary.
125. Resources and accommodation are good, with good use made of display space on the corridor outside, which is shared with other subjects on a cross-curricular basis. This joint use helps pupils in developing literacy skills and encouraging them to read. All staff make very good use of the environment to illustrate and underpin geographical concepts and curricular visits are a strong feature of the subject; all visits from school now routinely include a map so that pupils may develop their understanding of its use and purpose. Procedures for recording and assessing individual progress is satisfactory, but there is a need to make greater use of this information to plan future lessons and to ensure that activities to meet the needs of the highest and lowest attaining pupils in each group are formally planned for and met.

126. The subject co-ordinator has sound knowledge and understanding and has introduced a good policy and schemes of work which are well matched to the needs of the pupils in the school. Planning is good and is characterised by the value placed on the language needs of the pupils, by the key vocabulary essential to underpin basic concepts and the high quality of signing by teachers and support staff. The co-ordinator is highly committed and inspires enthusiasm among pupils. Elements of geography feature across the curriculum, for example visits to places of interest are first located on a map. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection, co-ordinating roles are now clearer and pupils' achievements have improved.

## **HISTORY**

127. It was not possible to observe any history lessons during the inspection, but examination of pupils' work, staff records and discussion with teachers showed that pupils make at least satisfactory progress and that teaching is well planned. Since the last inspection the school has introduced a good policy and scheme of work which provides good coverage of the National Curriculum.
128. Records and examples of work show that pupils are developing a good understanding of the past and the present. They have learnt about the difference in how we live now and contrasted this with the earlier lives of their parents and grandparents including the toys with which they played. This work has helped them to understand the passage of time and to reflect on human lifespans. Older pupils of eleven have learnt about the Greeks and the Romans and made more significant comparisons between past and present lifestyles.
129. As part of introducing the pupils to understanding and interpreting the past, the school organises regular visits to local museums and historical houses, for example to study the family story of a local chocolate manufacturing family. Pupils have learnt about the company's contribution to the local community, the village that they built for their workers and their social and cultural contribution to the city of Birmingham. As a result of such interesting work, pupils produce good quality entries in their workbooks and draw accurate sketches to record their experiences.
130. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and as a result pupils are motivated and develop an interest in the subject. Much history is taught on a topic basis and includes, in a project on houses for example, links to geography, science and design and technology by covering the principles involved in planning and constructing the houses. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to developing pupils' use of literacy through its emphasis on key words and also to the development of pupils' language which is very prominent with the introduction of key words. A further significant contribution is to the pupils' social and cultural development, through their understanding of a community and how the members develop a code of behaviour and a culture that is specific to their way of life.
131. The pupils' work is regularly assessed at both key stages with the results used well to identify the next learning objective. The assessment procedure and its impact on the teaching and learning are therefore useful in identifying what pupils have learnt and how well they have absorbed it. Pupils achieve well and by the age of eleven one pupil has reached each of Levels 3 and 4. This improvement in results and the new schemes of work represents good progress in the subject since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

132. The provision for information and communications technology (ICT) is very good. Although the pupils' levels of attainment overall remain below those of pupils in

mainstream schools, pupils' skills in the use of some aspects of ICT, approach those in mainstream schools, especially in their confidence and independent learning.

133. At the time of the last inspection, no judgement was made about ICT. There were very few computers. The ratio of computers to pupils is now much improved at 3:1, and there are weekly subject-based lessons that are specifically aimed at developing the pupils' technical skills. A major strength is the very effective way in which the use of ICT is now planned in all curriculum subjects. As a result all pupils are quickly learning the benefits of computers and other technology as a tool for their learning.
134. All classrooms are networked, and there is a five station ICT room, two portable computers and a SMART board touch screen. There are suitable schemes of work for all ages, which follow on from the good curricular preparation undertaken with children under five. Staff training opportunities are very good and available for all; weekly drop-in twilight sessions are well used by staff to resolve any difficulties and staff have good skills and confidence for teaching the children so that they make good gains in learning. Ongoing links with Deafchild International mean that children have access to dedicated fax lines and text phones in the ICT suite, and are involved in Fax Buddy initiatives. The school library houses a computer generated sign language resource, (Sign Graphics) which is widely used by staff to build BSL vocabulary.
135. Six-year-old pupils make good gains in learning and have built well upon the very good foundation for learning during the early years. They learn to programme a remote controlled robot and understand the different controls. They survey the colour of their taxis to school and, following discussion, learn to present the information on a chart. By the time they are seven pupils are familiar with a good range of aspects of ICT, and with help, compose faxes and e-mails to fax buddies, research house types on the Internet, and refer to digital camera images to record their experiences and prepare for visits.
136. Progress by the age of eleven is good overall with strengths in the every day use of ICT. LOGO is an area for further development. Because improvements in equipment are relatively new, older pupils are only now benefiting fully from the technology, with the result that their skills are relatively less advanced than their younger counterparts. By the age of eleven, pupils are combining graphics with print when they send faxes, creating calendar pages with correct layout for the days of the month, and a picture for the month attached. They learn to change the size of images, and rotate them. Nine-year-olds talk about the difficulties they have in their work and how they solved them. They make greetings cards combining borders, clipart and text for 'Happy Eid' and use clipart masks to research ideas for design and technology projects. In personal and social development lessons they carry out surveys and display them in block graphs and pie charts. They present information graphically where they display the equivalence, for example that one block represents three units. They know the terms for usage, such as 'file', 'print text', 'create', 'click', 'double click' and 'drag'. They have put their skills to good use by sending e-mails to the chair of governors from the school council requesting improvements to the school. Higher attaining pupils use spreadsheets independently and type up minutes of the school council meeting with very good accuracy and knowledge of page layout.
137. The teaching of ICT in the three lessons seen, was good in one out of three lessons, and very good in the remainder. Teachers make good use of a touch screen as a teaching aid and pupils enjoy taking turns to practise techniques and explore possibilities, for example creating a symmetrical pattern using a border and clipart images. A strong feature of teaching is that all the adults have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and encouragement is given to pupils to work

independently. Lessons are well planned and pupils are well prepared for the task they are to do, often by the use of the touch screen. Learning objectives are clear, and there is very good continuity and progression built into the programmes of study. Where teaching is no more than satisfactory, teachers pay less attention to using and checking key words, so that pupils' own knowledge of their learning is unclear and the teacher's knowledge of their grasp is equally so, despite pupils completing the tasks set.

138. Assessment procedures are good and a record of work is kept for each pupil so that progress towards National Curriculum levels is broken down into 'can do' statements. This is recorded in the front of the pupils' books so that they know precisely what they have achieved and what they should concentrate on next.
139. Management of ICT is very good and supported by a suitably qualified technician who keeps the system in check. The co-ordinator has a good time allotment to manage the subject. There is a very clear draft policy, systems for monitoring management performance, for targeting new initiatives, monitoring teachers' planning within ICT, for ICT across the curriculum and for assessing pupils' longer-term achievements. Improvements are planned for more detailed assessment of pupils' skills, for monitoring pupils' work across the key stages, and for developing LOGO. Resources are plentiful, but it is difficult to know whether they are well used because, although there are systems to record use of and loan of programs, teachers do not regularly complete the records.

## **MUSIC**

140. It was only possible to observe two music lessons with nine to eleven-year-old pupils during the inspection but it is clear from this evidence that expectations are high, that teaching is very good and that pupils enjoy the lessons and make clear gains in learning.
141. The teacher has very good musical knowledge and skills and knows the pupils very well. Music lessons are action-packed, with every second used to good effect to stimulate and engage the pupils in musical activities. The teacher uses a very good range of methods from leading unaccompanied singing and signing, to video recording a signed story for the pupils to interpret with instruments.
142. However, pupils make the best progress when they simply work with a range of drums and untuned percussion to interpret a sequence of sporting activities through their playing. Under the direction of the teacher the pupils interpret running, jumping and throwing so that after several rehearsals pupils refine their performance. Despite the fact that they cannot hear their playing, they co-ordinate their actions to produce a synchronised performance which helps them to improve their co-ordination and control of instruments.
143. The music curriculum is derived from a commercially produced scheme that provides access to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The school has adapted its approach and has found innovative ways of enabling access to music for the profoundly deaf pupils. The emerging procedures for recording and assessing pupils' progress show that they are gradually developing their skills through an activity-rich programme.
144. The subject was not observed during the last inspection. Music lessons of high quality show good levels of improvement over time.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

145. Overall, except for a few individuals, attainment in physical education is below national expectations for pupils in this age range. However, all pupils make good and very good progress and achieve well in swimming, gymnastics and dance. This is a result of specialist teaching that is always good and most often very good and because activities are appropriately challenging and build on prior learning. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection when teaching and learning were judged to be satisfactory. There are no obvious differences in the standards reached by different ethnic groups.
146. Pupils up to the age of seven, make good progress while swimming at a local hydrotherapy pool. Older higher attaining pupils swim a width of the small pool using the 'dog paddle' stroke. They float face down using a 'star float' and they retrieve a rubber brick from shallow water, which requires them to plunge underwater. Younger lower attaining pupils relax and float or allow themselves to be towed in the water. All visibly gain in confidence and basic water skills during the lesson. Teaching is good because efficient organisation results in maximum time being spent in the water. Good use is made of armbands and toys so pupils relax and thoroughly enjoy the experience. Good subject expertise and signing ensures pupils acquire and develop skills.
147. Pupils up to the age of eleven, build on this sound basis. Pupils make very good progress in the learner pool at the local baths. Good organisation makes effective use of pool space, pupil grouping and staff deployment. A purposeful ethos ensures that every minute is used to further pupils' progress. Higher attaining pupils swim ten metres across the pool with efficient leg kicks and developing arm strokes in front and back crawl. Lower attaining pupils, well supported by arm-bands, float on their front and back unaided and experience the sensation of buoyancy. Appropriate attention is shown to the personal and social development of dressing and undressing and to all health and safety matters. Good instruction, observational skills and constructive suggestions from qualified attendants enables pupils to improve. Pupils are totally attentive and co-operative and this enhances their learning.
148. In gymnastics, pupils aged seven to eleven make very good progress in practising, improving and refining the quality of their movements on the floor and on apparatus. Higher attaining pupils climb ropes efficiently and perform vaults over a 'long' box taking off from a trampette. Lower attaining pupils travel across benches and beams with increasing balance and co-ordination. All pupils work with an awareness of safety and of other pupils around them. The lesson is well organised so that pupils are challenged appropriately with a range of apparatus and activities. Their behaviour is excellent, their exuberance contained and their energy sustained, because this is expected of them. They handle apparatus with care and confidence. The teacher's obvious expertise and confidence transmits itself to the pupils who try harder. There is an excellent ethos with everyone working together and celebrating each other's achievement. All pupils and adults are properly changed for the activity reflecting the high standards expected in this subject.
149. In dance, all pupils make very good progress in response to very good and exciting teaching from a dance instructor. In one lesson pupils build on their work on animal characteristics and all copy simple movements. All pupils show feeling and rhythm for the movement of animals, for music is carefully chosen to match the theme. They readily join in 'Follow the leader' games, sit quietly to watch others perform, watch signing carefully and follow instructions. They learn about different animals – their name, colour and movement – because the instructor demonstrates effectively and shows a range of large pictures. Higher attaining pupils link movements well with good quality and body tension. Lower attaining pupils' movements lack the same fluency and control but they also complete the activity. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution by providing good role models in their own dance

movements and by their judicious use of support. The lesson concludes with a formal thank you and goodbye session, with pupils shaking hands with the person on their left and with a full bow to each other. Pupils go off with a raised self-esteem and a feeling of achievement.

150. Physical education is well led by an experienced specialist. He provides professional leadership for his colleagues including a concern for rigour and quality. There is a good scheme of work in place which meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum and covers a good balance of activities. New assessment procedures are being developed. Resources are satisfactory and the school makes good use of community facilities and specialist teaching, for example dance and tennis, to enhance its curriculum. The school takes part in the national cross-country competition for deaf children. There are good playing fields for games and athletics but the space in the hall is restricted by the lack of a proper store for large physical education apparatus.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

151. It was not possible to observe any religious education lessons during the inspection. However, examination of pupils' work and displays, teachers' records and planning and discussion with the co-ordinator show that pupils make at least satisfactory progress and that teaching is well planned.
152. Pupils up to the age of seven make satisfactory progress over time in developing concepts on such themes as special clothes, special things and special places. They understand that all people are different but that they themselves are unique, for example, no one else has their fingerprints. Pupils up to the age of eleven learn about different faiths and make attractive and comprehensive displays of their work, for example, Islam, Sikhism and Judaism. They study holy books, symbols, costumes and customs. Their knowledge and understanding is further enhanced by visits to places of worship. The subject is taught in an inter-related curriculum way that reinforces literacy and art in particular, and makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
153. Religious education is managed in a satisfactory manner by a new co-ordinator, who is aware of areas for development. Arrangements for the teaching of religious education meet statutory requirements. A policy and appropriate links to the local agreed syllabus inform planning within the subject. This should be developed into a scheme of work, which indicates when particular themes/topics will be taught, in what order and by whom. Assessment procedures are underdeveloped. There is a good range of resources to support teaching about the major world religions, however, there have been no recent additions, for example in information and communication technology, or audio-visual reference material. The school should consider whether sufficient time is devoted to the subject, particularly for older pupils, where its timetable slot is shared with personal and social education and thinking skills. Improvements since the previous inspection have been minimal.