

INSPECTION REPORT

ASTON TOWER COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Aston, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103370

Headteacher: Mr D Watson

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Fitzpatrick
24326

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 June 2002

Inspection number: 206367

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior school

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Upper Sutton Street
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Birmingham

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Malik Ullah

Date of previous inspection: 14 September 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
24326	Mrs M Fitzpatrick	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9399	Mr R Watts	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
21910	Mr G Longton	Team inspector	<p>Geography</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Religious education</p>	
30033	Mr M Wright	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>Design and technology</p> <p>History</p>	
25384	Mr R Bonner	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Art and design</p> <p>Physical education</p>	
17736	Mr P Dennison	Team inspector	<p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>Science</p>	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

12394	Mrs C May	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage English as an additional language Information and communication technology	
26514	Mrs A Tapsfield	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is bigger than other primary schools with 330 pupils in the main school. There is a 65 place Nursery unit which children attend on a part-time or full-time basis. The majority of pupils in the school are from Bangladeshi origin (44%), with a high percentage of pupils from Pakistani (18%) and black Caribbean (12%) origin. Overall there is a diverse ethnic mix in the school. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is very high (67%). Of these, 42 pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is well above the national average, while the percentage of pupils who have statements of special educational need is below the national average. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have difficulties with literacy and numeracy and some have moderate learning difficulties. Overall the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is very low, with many pupils joining the Nursery who have very little spoken English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Aston Tower Primary provides a sound education for its pupils and though standards are well below the national average, they are beginning to rise in all subjects. The leadership of the headteacher is very good in providing clear direction and ambition for a school in challenging circumstances. The quality of teaching is satisfactory leading to sound progress for pupils, except for those with special educational needs and some older pupils who are at an early stage of learning English, who do not have enough support in class. Given the standards achieved, the very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the good attitudes pupils have towards learning, the school is judged to give satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good leadership from the headteacher in setting the right priorities for the school and in convincing colleagues of their ability to improve the school.
- Outstanding provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes gives an excellent start to their learning.
- Very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. They are tolerant, respectful and have good self-esteem as a result.
- Pupils have good attitudes to school. They work hard and form supportive caring relationships with each other and their teachers.
- The school promotes good behaviour through its very good systems for monitoring and supporting pupils. As a result they behave well.
- The school has been very successful in winning back the confidence of parents and because of this numbers on roll are rising.

What could be improved

- Raise standards, especially in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology.
- Improve provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Improve provision for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.
- Develop the role of subject co-ordinators so that they have accountability for standards in their subject.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since it was last inspected in September 1998. Following the previous inspection, the school went into a period of rapid decline. Until September

2001, improvement had been inconsistent and was unsatisfactory. The school was placed in a category of high concern by the local education authority and given additional support to help it improve. Since September 2001, the school has made considerable improvement and has laid good foundations to promote good teaching and learning. All of the issues identified in the previous inspection have been tackled, though there is further work to do on assessment and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. There are now schemes of work in place for all subjects to guide teachers' planning and there have been considerable improvements in the amount and range of assessment made of pupils' learning. Both the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully implemented. Taking into account the improvement in leadership and management of the school, the good systems in place for monitoring the work of the school and the much improved staff morale and expertise, the school is now in a strong position to improve further. The school failed to meet the low targets that it set for the national test in 2001. This year's targets are more ambitious and based on good assessment of what pupils can do. Unconfirmed results suggest that these targets have been met.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	E*	E*	E*
Mathematics	E*	E*	E*	E*
Science	E*	E*	E*	E*

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

very low E*

The trend in results has fallen since the last inspection mainly as a result of high teacher turnover and some weak teaching in the past. The school's performance in the national tests in 2001 places it in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. Girls' performance in all subjects was better than that of boys. Since the start of this school year the school has made very good improvement in the climate for learning and there is evidence that standards are rising. Unconfirmed results from this year's tests indicate that the number of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected level has doubled in each of the subjects. In other subjects, Year 6 pupils are reaching the expected standard, except in information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology and geography, where they are below the expected standard. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 is satisfactory in all subjects because they work hard and teaching is often good. The lower standards in some subjects are due pupils having less time to study them in the current year. In the national tests for Year 2 pupils, their performance in reading was well below the national average. In writing and mathematics the standards reached by pupils were very low compared with all schools and these results place them in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. There is evidence that standards are also rising by the end of Year 2. Again, results for this year's tests show a significant improvement on last year's results. In all subjects, except design and technology, pupils are reaching the expected standard. Their achievement is satisfactory because of their enthusiasm for learning and because their teachers expect them to work hard. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make very good progress in all areas of learning, from a very low level of attainment on entry. By the time they leave Reception they have made very good gains in their learning but do not attain the expected level in communication, language and literacy, mathematics or knowledge and understanding of the world. They achieve the expected standard in creative and physical development and in personal, social and emotional development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are eager to learn and they work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils fully understand the need for rules and follow them consistently both in and out of the classroom.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good and pupils are keen to accept responsibility. Relationships are very good and make a strong contribution to pupils' learning.
Attendance	Well below the national average but there has been very good improvement in this school year. A small minority regularly arrive late for school.

Attendance for most pupils is about the national average. However, the attendance of pupils in the Nursery and Reception is about 20 percentage points behind this and seriously reduces the attendance figures in the school overall. The headteacher is beginning to convince some parents of the negative impact of taking their children on extended holidays in term time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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.

Teachers have sound subject knowledge and expect their pupils to work hard, which they do. In English, the teaching of literacy is satisfactory and all pupils, except those with special educational needs or those at an early stage of learning English, make steady progress. For these pupils, the lack of expert support or sometimes specific work suited to their needs reduces their progress and over time it is unsatisfactory. In mathematics, teaching is satisfactory and teachers make effective use of the Numeracy Strategy to improve pupils' quick thinking and reasoning about number. Pupils respond well to the methods used and are eager to answer questions. A weakness in both subjects is the inconsistent use of assessment by teachers to plan the next stage of learning for pupils. The result is that sometimes the work set is either too difficult or too easy and pupils do not make the best progress that they could. Teaching in art and design, music and physical education is good overall throughout the school. Pupils respond very positively to the practical activities involved and they enjoy sharing their growing expertise with the rest of the class when asked to give a demonstration or explain how they achieved an effect in art work. In these lessons pupils achieve well because the nature of the tasks suits their style of learning. In all other subjects, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and the teaching is often good and sometimes very good. The quality of teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is high and leads to very good learning for all children. They are given many opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative and this increases their confidence as learners. One excellent mathematics lesson was seen where children learned at a rapid rate because of the teacher's very good questioning and the well planned activities for individuals.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is a suitable range of activities to support pupils' academic and personal development. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. The Foundation Stage curriculum is of very high quality.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Curriculum provision is satisfactory, but planning to meet the targets on individual education plans and the level of support are unsatisfactory and need improvement.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good provision for children at an early stage of learning English in the Nursery and Reception classes. Satisfactory provision for pupils who have become fluent in English. Unsatisfactory levels of support for pupils in Year 1 to 6 who are not yet fluent in English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. A strength of the school in promoting a harmonious and tolerant community where cultural diversity is recognised, respected and celebrated. Pupils have very good moral guidance from their teachers and good opportunities to work together.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils through well designed welfare provision and well thought out procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and improving attendance. The range of procedures for monitoring pupils' attainment is satisfactory, though their use by all teachers is inconsistent and unsatisfactory overall.

The school has developed good relationships with parents this year and has succeeded in winning back their support for the school. Currently parents do not make a significant impact on the work of the school, though the school has plans to improve this in the next year.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership by the headteacher, who has set high expectations for teachers and pupils since he joined the school at the start of the year. He has been well supported in bringing about improvement by the skills and hard work of the deputy headteachers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. All statutory requirements are met. Governors have a growing understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have been closely involved in strategic planning to help it improve.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher has established a good range of systems to monitor the work of the school. Senior managers have a clear picture of what needs to be done to ensure that standards rise.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall. The spending on special educational needs and provision for pupils with English as an additional language, has been monitored closely this year leading to a review and revision of how support for these pupils is organised.

There are enough teachers with the right expertise to teach all subjects. Support staff make a satisfactory contribution to the learning of pupils. The senior management team has recently begun implementing its strategy for a more efficient and effective use of learning support assistants. The school has adequate accommodation to meet the needs of the curriculum but learning resources are low in many subjects and need to be improved. The school is careful to seek best value in what it does and what it buys and has effective systems to help it do this.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of teaching. • How hard their children work. • The progress their children make. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities that the school provides. • Behaviour in the school. • The amount of homework that their children are set.
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Parents' positive views of the school are supported by the evidence of the inspection. The inspection team does not agree that behaviour is a weakness, though this was apparently the case in the last school year. Behaviour in the school is good and the range of activities available to pupils is about average for this size of school. Inspectors agree with parents that arrangements for homework are not consistent and need to be improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When the children start Nursery, their knowledge, skills and understanding are very much lower than expected for their age. Approximately half the children in the Nursery have English as an additional language and half of these are at the earliest stages of speaking English. The current Reception class made satisfactory progress during their time in the Nursery, however, on entry to the Reception class, the assessment of children's progress showed that the attainment of pupils had remained very low. By the time they enter Year 1, children have achieved the standard expected in personal, social and emotional development, creative and physical development but not in communication, language and literacy, mathematics or knowledge and understanding of the world.
2. In the national test taken by pupils in Year 2 in 2001, the school's performance was well below the national average and the average of similar schools¹ in reading and very low, in the lowest five per cent, in writing and mathematics. In the teacher assessments in science, pupils standards were well below the average. Standards have declined since the last inspection in all of these subjects, mainly due to high teacher turn over and weak teaching in the past. This decline has now been arrested and standards are beginning to rise. For example, while standards found during inspection are still well below the national average in all three subjects, there are many more pupils reaching the expected level by the end of Year 2 than did so in the national tests last year. Furthermore, the results of this year's national tests confirm inspection findings that twice as many pupils are reaching the expected level than formerly. This is because of the very much improved climate for learning that has developed under the leadership of the newly appointed headteacher and a much greater stability in staffing which has led to better provision for steady progress in pupils' learning.
3. In the national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2001, the school's performance was very low in English, mathematics and science and placed the school in the lowest five per cent of all schools. Standards have declined since the last inspection, but as with Year 2, this pattern has now been arrested. Twice as many pupils in Year 6 now are reaching the expected standard in all of these subjects than did so last year, because of a better climate for working and better teaching. Unconfirmed results for this year's national tests indicate that about sixty per cent of pupils reached the expected standards in each of these subjects, which is double the percentage of those who reached the expected standard last year.
4. Standards in reading for Year 2 are well below the average, though they are improving and pupils have a sound recall of what they read with the teacher. There are weaknesses in the range of strategies that some pupils use, for instance too many pupils rely either on picture clues or whole-word recognition in their reading and make little use of letter sounds to help them say unfamiliar words. In their writing, pupils create stories with a sound structure and probable events. Their spelling is below average but mostly can be understood and the majority are able to write their letters legibly. Most pupils achieve better standards in speaking and listening because they are given frequent opportunities to practise these skills. By

¹ This refers to schools which have a similar percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Year 6 standards are well below the national average, but twice as many pupils are now reaching the level expected for their age than did at this time last year. This significant improvement is due to more settled staffing and the good quality of teaching that Year 6 classes receive. Pupils use persuasive language appropriately when writing about water supplies to homes. Their writing is clear and legible but overall it lacks the range of vocabulary and structure that is usually found in pupils of this age. Standards in reading are well below average and show the impact of weaker teaching and interrupted learning in the past. Many pupils struggle to pronounce or work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and this hampers their understanding of what they read. As in Years 1 and 2, the standards of speaking and listening are better than reading and writing and teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and use of the language. From Year 1 to Year 6 the achievement of the great majority of pupils is satisfactory, because of sound teaching, their good attitudes to learning and the effort they put into their work.

5. Standards in mathematics in Year 2 are well below the average, though the vast majority of pupils make satisfactory progress and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils count forwards and backwards accurately using 2, 5, and 10. They understand place value and know how this changes when adding. They have weaknesses in their ability to solve problems and to subtract accurately. By Year 6 standards are still well below average. Nonetheless, they make satisfactory progress and their achievement is satisfactory. They accurately multiply numbers by 10 and 100. While they understand how to add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers, many have a weak understanding of decimals. Problem solving activities continue to present difficulties for many pupils.
6. Standards in science are well below the average in Year 2 and Year 6. The great majority of pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve what is expected of them; in some classes their achievement is good. In Year 2 pupils name and know the properties of common materials. They understand the need for a healthy diet and which foods supply this. Their depth of understanding is not strong and because they have difficulty in recording their learning they often have difficulty recalling what they have learned. By Year 6 pupils have a sound understanding of a range of scientific ideas. They know how organisms adapt to suit the environment and have a sound understanding of the parts and functions of the human body. They carry out investigations planned by the teacher and while they contribute ideas of their own, most are not able to construct their own experiments in a way expected for their age.
7. In other subjects, pupils reach the expected standard for their age in art and design, history, music, physical education and religious education. In Years 1 and 2 pupils also reach the expected standard in geography and information and communication technology. Standards are below the expectation for all pupils in design and technology because of the lack of time devoted to the subject this year. In Year 6, standards are below the expectation for age in information and communication technology, mainly because pupils have only benefited from regular access to computers since the start of this school year. They are also below the expectation in geography because of the reduced time given to the subject in favour of literacy and numeracy. However, standards in Years 3 to 5 are at the expected level for geography and are further evidence of rising standards in the school.
8. Pupils with special educational needs do not make similar progress to their classmates. This is because they do not always receive sufficient additional support, particularly outside of literacy and numeracy lessons. The individual pupils for whom

support is sufficient, make good progress in lessons and achieve well against their objectives for a lesson because of the good level of support they receive. However, their ability to apply their skills is reduced when they do not have adult support and they need more opportunities to work unaided in order to develop their confidence.

9. Pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), and are fluent in English, make the same progress as other pupils of the same attainment and they reach similar standards. For those at an early stage of fluency, rates of progress vary according to the age of the pupils. In the Nursery and Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2, they make at least satisfactory progress in their learning because they are well supported by bi-lingual assistants. Elsewhere in the school where this support is not in place or learning assistants have not had training to support EAL pupils, then their progress is sometimes unsatisfactory. It is because of this variation in provision and its impact on pupils' learning that the school has reviewed and revised its approach to overcoming all barriers to learning. Work has already begun on assessing the training needs of support staff and in matching support to pupils' needs across the school.
10. The use of literacy across the curriculum is variable and an area for development. Where teachers make use of literacy skills to promote learning in other subjects through reading and writing, pupils' level of literacy improve because of this. However in too many classes the use of literacy is restricted to English lessons so that pupils are not practising what they learn in order to consolidate their skills.
11. Some teachers are effective in promoting some aspects of numeracy in other subjects. For example in Year 6 history lessons pupils have analysed census data and population changes to draw conclusions about why certain events happened in the past. Some use is made of numeracy in measuring and counting to record findings in science investigations. However, this is still an area for development in the school of which the senior managers are aware.
12. The impact of ICT on pupils' learning is just beginning to have effect and teachers are making effective use of computers to teach the skills that pupils will apply to their learning in other subjects. While there is little evidence of computers being used in other subjects, the confidence of teachers and pupils is growing and in time this should support the application of ICT skills to other subjects.
13. Since the start of the current school year there has been a very clear focus on raising standards through careful planning and the expectation that pupils will work hard. Much has been achieved that supports the raising of standards. The teaching staff is now stable and very committed to improving standards; the quality of teaching has improved significantly because of the school's monitoring procedures and the planned professional development of teachers and learning support assistants. The behaviour of pupils and the climate for learning now support better progress and are having a positive impact on standards as well as pupils' attitudes to work. The school did not reach its targets in the national test in 2001, because of the high level of teacher mobility. Unconfirmed results for this year's tests indicate a significant improvement in pupils' performance which demonstrates the school's capacity to improve and set targets that it can reach.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils have good attitudes towards the school and their education. In the opinion of parents, most pupils enjoy school and this is borne out by conversations with pupils.

In the Nursery, children feel secure, show confidence in the staff and great enthusiasm for the activities provided. At the end of a session where they had been putting numbers onto a 'Bingo' card, they all stood and cheered and clapped when the group task was completed. In the rest of the school, most lessons start promptly, although activities at the start of the day are sometimes delayed by the dozen or so pupils who arrive late. Very often pupils become more involved during practical activities. When the task is challenging and appropriate to what they already know, pupils generally concentrate well and work hard. They are generally enthusiastic about doing things outside the classroom, such as the lunchtime and after-school activities.

15. Pupils with special educational needs have satisfactory attitudes to school. They try hard in lessons when a member of staff supports them. However, a minority find it difficult to concentrate in lessons and do not have sufficient strategies to help them develop self-discipline. Other children give good support to their peers with special educational needs, celebrating their successes generously and taking trouble to include them in group activities.
16. The behaviour of pupils is good. Parents in the parents' meeting commented that behaviour had improved dramatically this year and pupils agreed. One pupil who was unacceptably rude to staff was excluded for a short period this year but this is a good improvement on last year when there were eight short-term exclusions. In most lessons, pupils respond well to a combination of a quiet reminder to pay attention and encouragement and praise when they do so. Generally teachers need to spend little time on this and can concentrate on their teaching; this contributes towards the good rate of learning seen in many lessons. Pupils' behaviour as they move around the school and in assemblies is also good, and dinnertime gives pupils a good experience of social interaction in a calm atmosphere. Pupils fully accept the validity of the school rules and agree that discipline is now firm but fair. They recognise the difference between right and wrong and generally abide by the rules. They have had the opportunity to discuss the reasons behind these and to devise their own class rules to supplement them.
17. The personal development of pupils is good and relationships within the school are very good. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children are gaining in confidence and maturity so that they each play an increasing role as part of the class. In most lessons for pupils over five, the good rapport between adults and pupils is very noticeable and pupils respond well to the efforts of staff to build this, and to the very good role models they provide. Pupils are starting to discuss their work and how it can be improved. They are learning to work to support each other and are often very considerate and helpful. They do not tolerate someone laughing at the mistakes of another and, as a consequence, pupils are able to be adventurous in putting forward ideas. Pupils are particularly sympathetic to the needs of those who are not yet fluent in English; they wait patiently when they struggle to find the words to express themselves. These pupils are thus able to gain from the lesson, even when, as is sometimes the case, there is insufficient bilingual support. They recognise the many beliefs and ways of life that they see around them in the school. They are used to discussing these differences and accept the equality of all. Pupils willingly accept responsibilities offered, for example older pupils help supervise and play with the younger ones during wet playtimes. The school council conducts business with seriousness and maturity and they discuss a wide range of concerns for pupils. Pupils from all the various backgrounds play well together in the playgrounds and there are few incidents of conflict, either deliberate or accidental. No incidents of bullying, racism or social exclusion were observed during the inspection but some

pupils said that there was sometimes bullying. However, this is much less frequent than before and the staff dealt with it effectively when told.

18. Overall attendance this year, at 92.2 per cent, is well below the national average for primary schools but nevertheless represents a very significant improvement over last year. Some families take extended authorised absence to south Asia but this has significantly reduced both in frequency and length of absence. Absence authorised for religious observance, celebration of Eid-al-Fitr, amounting to about 0.3 per cent, is not included in the school's figures. Attendance improves as pupils get older, reflecting their own motivation to attend and ability to get themselves to school. Attendance in the Nursery and Reception classes is very poor, and parents too readily do not bring their child. The rate of unauthorised absence is also reducing but still above average. About five per cent of pupils arrive after the register has been taken each day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all but six out of eighty seven lessons observed. In six out of ten lessons teaching was good or better, and in over a quarter of lessons teaching was very good. One excellent lesson was seen. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and this is due to the emphasis that the headteacher places on thorough monitoring of teaching and learning and the provision that the school makes for the professional development of teachers and learning support assistants.
20. The quality of teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is very high, and one excellent lesson in mathematics was seen. All staff in the Nursery and Reception classes plan together to ensure that children have a wide range of activities and challenges. The very good assessment of children's learning is put to good use by teachers when they plan the next stage of learning for all classes in the Nursery and Reception. Teachers also make good use of bi-lingual support assistants, who make a significant contribution to children's understanding of stories, instructions and explanations. As a result of the high quality planning and very good teaching, children make very good progress in their learning and quickly develop confidence and independence.
21. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall, with about half the lessons good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in these classes. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of pupils in their classes. They choose their language carefully so that pupils who are at an early stage of learning English are able to understand simple instructions. Teachers are aware that their pupils learn best through practical activities. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson, pupils were enthusiastic and worked well together when they experimented with sounds and made decisions about what sounds they could hear and how they were made. The teacher gave them plenty of opportunity to discover for themselves, which helped pupils' concentration. They were less able to work independently when they came to record their learning.
22. The quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 ranges from very good to unsatisfactory and is satisfactory overall. There are many examples of very good teaching, particularly in Year 3 and Year 6 and some in Year 5. In these lessons teachers have good expectations of what pupils can do and present them with stimulating challenges. In a very good art and design lesson the teacher made good use of demonstration to show the pupils how to create a stencil. This gave pupils confidence to try for

themselves, and successfully overcame any language problems that some pupils may have encountered during the explanation.

23. The learning support assistants currently make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning. In some classes where the teacher plans what they will do and who they will support, they make a good contribution. There is a need for further professional development for learning support assistants, to enable them to give good support to pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy and to those pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. The school is aware of this need and has plans for further training for support assistants in the next school year.
24. The teaching of literacy in English lessons is satisfactory overall. In lessons in Years 1 and 2, teachers place good emphasis on speaking and listening so that pupils improve their knowledge and understanding of English. In some lessons teachers do not place a strong enough emphasis on teaching letter sounds and this reduces the ability of some pupils to sound out unfamiliar words or to use letter sounds to assist them with their spelling. In Years 3 to 6, most teachers plan effectively for the groups in their classes. In a very good lesson seen in Year 3, the teacher prepared all pupils very thoroughly for their letter writing tasks, then ensured that each group had a different task that was well suited to their skills and knowledge. Because of this careful planning, all pupils in the class made very good progress in their writing and were delighted to share their letters at the end of the lesson. Teachers make appropriate use of the Literacy Strategy format to give pupils an opportunity to develop reading skills. In the best examples seen, teachers have a clear focus for the reading activity and know what they want pupils to learn. In other lessons, where teaching is weak or unsatisfactory, teachers do not give pupils enough support or guidance to allow them to be successful when working independently. As a result pupils' concentration often wavers and they make less than expected progress.
25. The teaching of mathematics ranges from very good to unsatisfactory, and is satisfactory overall. Teachers make satisfactory use of the Numeracy Strategy to develop pupils' mental agility with number, at the start of lessons. Pupils enjoy this format for learning and are always positive in their response to the brisk challenges that teachers set in the opening part of the lesson. In a good Year 2 lesson, the bright and positive start made pupils enthusiastic to learn about the topic and they made good progress as a result. Where teachers have very high expectations of pupils, as in a very good Year 6 lesson, the teacher's high level of challenge stimulated pupils to think hard and improve at a rapid rate. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the quality of questions at the start of the lesson is not well targeted at checking what pupils know so that appropriate challenges can be set. Another feature of weaker lessons is the inappropriate level of tasks set, which slows down pupils' progress either because the work is too easy or too difficult.
26. Teaching in all other subjects ranges from unsatisfactory to very good and is at least satisfactory overall. Teaching in art and design places good emphasis on skills development, and in lessons in Years 3 and 6 very good teaching led to good quality work for pupils who worked with great enthusiasm. The quality of teaching in ICT is satisfactory overall, with very good teaching seen in Year 5 classes and in Year 3. Again, in these lessons, teachers understand the importance of using demonstration to teach skills and then allow pupils plenty of opportunity to practise them. In very good physical education lessons in Year 2 and Year 6, the teachers made good use of pupils' performance to demonstrate the quality of work that could be achieved. They succeeded in motivating all pupils to try harder and raise their level of performance as a result. In music the quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching

in religious education places good emphasis on learning about customs and traditions.

27. Pupils respond best and learn at a good pace in lessons where the teacher plans a variety of activities within a given timescale. This method of learning suits the many children who find it difficult to concentrate for long periods and is a useful way of extending their concentration while holding their interest. Pupils of all ages enjoy working together and are particularly eager to learn by doing practical activities. In science and art and design lessons, where teachers allowed pupils to investigate and experiment for themselves, the pace of learning was improved and pupils showed good recall of what they had been learning.
28. Overall, teachers' use of assessing pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. While there are systems for recording pupils' learning and testing their knowledge through a range of standardised tests, many teachers do not use the results of these to plan the next stage of learning for their pupils. The school is aware of the need to develop the use of assessment both to tell teachers what they need to teach and to set targets for individuals and groups of pupils.
29. The quality of marking is variable and this is a weakness in some classes, leading to inappropriate work being set for pupils, which often frustrates or confuses them because it is either too easy or too difficult.
30. Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is a strength of teaching across the school. In all classes teachers follow the school's behaviour strategy. They adopt a positive approach to pupils' responses and give praise and encouragement throughout lessons. Teachers are skilled at drawing back into the lesson those pupils who have become distracted or lost concentration, usually without interrupting the learning of others.
31. Teachers plan suitable work for pupils with special educational needs. However, for some pupils with special educational needs there is insufficient support in lessons to enable them to learn effectively. In addition, not all teachers find it easy to plan activities that promote the independence of pupils with special educational needs and as a result pupils do not always make satisfactory progress in acquiring basic skills. When pupils with special needs are supported well, they are positive in their response both to class work and to the work they undertake with the special needs support assistants. They work hard and are keen to please their teachers and support assistants.
32. Pupils are expected to do some work at home to consolidate their learning. The setting of homework is inconsistent and particularly for reading there is not the rigour of high expectation from all teachers to ensure that pupils practise regularly. By the time they are in Year 6 pupils are not fully prepared for the demands of the secondary school because they have not developed the independent learning skills expected of 11 years olds.

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

33. At the time of the last inspection the school's curriculum and planning were satisfactory overall with some weaknesses in planning. The curriculum provided by the school now is satisfactory. Following a period of considerable disruption and numerous changes of staff, curriculum planning was reviewed at the beginning of

this school year and there is now a clear whole-school framework to provide appropriate coverage of all subjects in the National Curriculum and religious education.

34. The planning for the Nursery and Reception classes, which was satisfactory at the last inspection, has improved and is now of a very high quality and themes such as 'Mini-Beasts' and 'Out and About' are used very effectively to foster children's progress.
35. The school provides a satisfactory range of activities to support pupils' academic and personal development in Years 1 to 6. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been used satisfactorily to provide a framework for planning in these subjects. The school has also adopted the national guidance relating to planning for other subjects in the National Curriculum. Teachers use this guidance to prepare their weekly plans. Lessons usually provide work that is matched to the needs and abilities of pupils within the class. However, this is not always the case and teachers intend to review and amend this planning where necessary to ensure that it fully meets the needs of all pupils.
36. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of special educational need, is satisfactory overall. Although the support pupils receive for basic skills is not always sufficient, the school's new strategy for removing barriers to learning is beginning to have an impact in some classes. Staff make use of a broad range of approaches, strategies and special learning programmes to address each child's needs. Pupils' individual education plans are written jointly by the special needs co-ordinator and the class teacher in consultation with the learning support assistants, parents and pupil. These focus on reading, writing, spelling and elements of numeracy.
37. The major priority this year has been the development of English and mathematics. The school is a member of the local Education Action Zone and this has provided considerable support to develop the curriculum in literacy and numeracy. There are clear plans in place to develop the science curriculum further next year. There has been significant improvement in the curriculum for information and communication technology. All pupils have regular access to the computer suite and their computer skills are improving. However, computers are not yet being used as effectively as they could be to support pupils' learning in other subjects.
38. Arrangements for personal, social and health education are satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Issues such as healthy eating and drugs awareness are addressed and there are opportunities to discuss other moral and social issues as well as sexual development.
39. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn and improve and this is reflected in all lessons and extra-curricular activities. There is a satisfactory range of additional activities that enhance the day-to-day curriculum. Teachers give their time generously after school and at lunchtime to organise clubs and activities available to pupils throughout the school. These include football, athletics, dance, sewing, choir, and a writing club.
40. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Visitors to the school from the community make positive contributions to pupils' learning and self-esteem. These include local people who spoke about their experiences as newcomers to the country. The minister from the local church is a regular visitor and makes a very

positive contribution to school assemblies. The police and the school nurse contribute to the personal, social and health education programme. Similarly, teachers make good use of local facilities such as the Council House, and local art galleries and museums to provide interesting experiences for their classes. Visits to places of educational interest such as Aston Hall, RAF Cosford and the West Midlands Safari Park help to develop their awareness and knowledge of the world beyond the school gates.

41. The school has established very good liaison with the local secondary school. Year 6 pupils have opportunities to visit and make use of facilities for art and design, design and technology and physical education. Additional music teaching will be available next year from a musician at the secondary school who will spend some time at Aston Tower.
42. The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the school. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. It has been given high priority by the new headteacher and all staff since his appointment in September 2002. Parents are now happy with the attitudes and values that the school promotes.
43. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. The school creates a quiet, respectful atmosphere for growing and learning. This provides pupils with a belief that their school is a special place with special people who can all grow and flourish. The quality of collective worship in the school promotes pupils' understanding of human feelings and emotions well. Acts of collective worship are underpinned by the strong belief that all pupils in the school are valued and are equal and have a full contribution to make to their school. They include a time for pupils to reflect quietly on the theme of the week. Assemblies also encourage the spiritual elements of different religious festivals such as Diwali, Eid, the Chinese New Year, and the Passover. Religious education lessons enable pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and those of others. They learn about the customs observed by different religious groups and their importance to those observing them. There are numerous displays that illustrate the value that teachers place upon their pupils' work. For instance, pupils in Years 5 and 6 produced a display on their residential visit to Bockelton where they took part in outdoor activities designed to teach pupils to have trust in each other. Year 1 pupils visit Birmingham City centre and discover the beauty of statues. Year 3 pupils worked on the improvement of the environment of the school, designing a garden and growing plants and flowers. Year 4 pupils study Picasso's "blue period" which helps them reflect on emotions and feelings. Such activities provide strong evidence of the breadth of experiences that pupils are offered to develop their spiritual awareness.
44. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The headteacher and all adults working in the school set very good examples. This makes pupils aware of the importance of rules that promote the values of honesty, justice and the care of others. Members of staff frequently give reasons for how their pupils should behave so that they have a good sense of right and wrong. They are given opportunities to make choices, accept the consequences and know that their teachers will always listen and support them. The headteacher maintains a high profile around the school; thus ensuring that the school rules are applied and that pupils are praised and encouraged for their good behaviour. Collective worship makes a valuable contribution to pupils' moral development. Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and treat any behavioural problems with firmness, patience and great sensitivity. Time is taken to listen to pupils and to explain why, when their behaviour

falls short of expectations, it is wrong, giving pupils a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Pupils discuss behaviour with their teacher at the beginning of the school year and agree a list of class rules. This helps to encourage good behaviour during the year. The whole ethos of the school is to create an atmosphere for work and learning within a happy and caring environment. The contributions of pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are valued by the whole school community.

45. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school aims to include everyone in every aspect of school life, including the welcoming of new arrivals. It also provides an effective means of helping pupils who have difficulty mixing with others to learn how to share, co-operate and develop effective relationships. As a result, that has a positive effect on pupils' progress in lessons. The headteacher sets a very good example by his personal approach to raising staff and pupils' self-esteem. All adults in the school mirror this example and the pupils are valued for their contribution to the school community. They are taught to respect themselves, other people and property. For example one display urges pupils to, "Be proud of who you are!" another tells pupils to "Achieve your success ladder!" Pupils are encouraged from an early age to take responsibility seriously and sensibly. For example, children in the Nursery and Reception classes are responsible for giving out fruit and milk at snack time. As they grow older they are given opportunities to help the school in many ways, for example, preparing the hall for assemblies, serving as house captains and keeping the library and the physical education store tidy. In this way they learn to work well together in a very harmonious way and to value each other's work. From Year 3, pupils are elected to serve on the school council to make suggestions about how the school could be improved. Pupils also participate in fund raising activities on behalf of young people less fortunate than themselves. They recently raised a considerable sum of money for Dr. Barnardo's Homes.
46. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils are given many opportunities to recognise and value essential aspects of their own culture and the culture of other people in Britain and the wider world. For example, Year 6 pupils carry out an in-depth study of Birmingham since the 1930s. There is much celebration of the school's own cultural diversity and pupils are encouraged to celebrate their own heritage as well as the history of other cultures and faiths. The school encourages families to become involved in local events associated with Black History month. The school library contains many stories from other cultures, for example, *Journey to Jo'burg* by Beverly Naidoo. Pupils learn about the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome. Pupils are introduced to the work of international artists, for example Year 2 produce repeated patterns inspired by William Morris and Arabic art. Teachers use fabric from many countries of the world to add colour and excitement to displays around the school. In many assemblies and music lessons pupils listen to the music of famous composers. Local artists visit the school and the pupils enjoyed a visit from an African drummer. These experiences support pupils' awareness of their own cultural heritage well and further develop their spiritual and social development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The school is now a caring, harmonious community and parents and pupils have commented about how much improvement there has been in stability and behaviour in the last year. Staff take good, practical measures to ensure that pupils are well cared for. Some staff are trained in first aid and if pupils are ill or have accidents at

school they are well looked after. Learning mentors concentrate on pupils with particular problems, for example behaviour or attendance. Health and safety risk assessments and equipment checks are carried out and the school is a safe environment. Child protection procedures, which meet local guidelines, are in place and the designated teacher and all staff have been appropriately trained in their use. Welfare agencies give the school very good support in the cases encountered.

48. The procedures adopted to improve behaviour this year have been very effective. The discipline system emphasises praise and the pupils value the system of rewards but also recognise a consistent approach if they misbehave. Behaviour is monitored effectively. The school has made a major effort to discuss bullying in assemblies and in personal and social education lessons. Pupils are now confident that the school will take action. Following international events last September, the staff worked very hard to rebuild positive relationships. One example was the impact of the 'Young American' dance outreach team which clearly impressed on pupils that all people can work together without conflict. The school has followed correct procedures when pupils have been excluded and appropriately supported them when they return, to lessen the likelihood of recurrence.
49. The support and care for the personal development of pupils with special educational needs is good. A good example of the range of recent initiatives is the 'Sixes and Sevens club' which helps children learn to play co-operatively with their classmates. Counselling is also available for children who need someone to talk to about any aspect of school or outside school life. Class teachers use the general assessment procedures to identify pupils' learning needs and the special needs co-ordinator undertakes more detailed diagnostic assessment of individual pupils as the need arises. The provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is good and staff monitor pupils' progress well.
50. The school makes very effective efforts to improve attendance and these have resulted in improving it by four per cent since last year. Teachers complete registers punctually at the start of each school session and pupils who are late are recorded as they arrive, so that accounting for pupils for fire safety is secure. The school has made a start in complying with the recommendation to contact parents if pupils are absent with no reason given. The school makes good use of the education welfare officer and learning mentors to support and encourage parents of the pupils who have the worst attendance records. Individual pupils and classes are regularly rewarded for consistently good or improved attendance and older pupils in particular are increasingly aware of the importance of good attendance. The school has discussed with Asian parents the impact of extended absence and this has reduced.
51. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress. When children enter the school in the Nursery and Reception classes their attainment levels are checked and pupils in Years 2 and 6 undertake all statutory assessments in English, mathematics and science. The school also carries out a range of additional tests in English and mathematics in Years 3, 4 and 5, writing assessments, reading and spelling tests. The school is beginning to use its analysis of assessment data well to set targets and monitor the achievement of different groups of pupils. Although much of this work is in its infancy the school has a clear view of where pupils are doing well and where additional support needs to be provided. The school has strengths in the way it compares its performance with schools locally and nationally and sets targets for improvement. It also carefully monitors results by gender and ethnicity, and takes effective action to provide

additional support where weaknesses have been identified. For example, the school identified that boys were not performing well in English and as a result they:

- invited an Afro-Caribbean male author into school,
- purchased a range of books specifically for boys,
- utilised computers for boys who found writing difficult, and
- focused on non-narrative writing.

52. The information gained from testing is used well to identify pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. For example, additional support was provided for a group of Bangladeshi boys who were not achieving as well as they should. Assessment information is used well to group pupils according to their prior attainment, in Years 2 to 6 for English and mathematics and to provide 'booster' lessons for pupils in these two subjects. There are some weaknesses in this area of the school's work however. For example, there is no thorough analysis of the science tests that pupils take in Years 2 and 6 and so the school is generally unaware of pupils' strengths and weaknesses in this subject. Pupils' achievements are also not being recorded in all other subjects of the curriculum although there are plans in place for this to happen.
53. There are considerable variations in the way in which the information gathered is used to guide the curriculum and to raise standards, but overall it is unsatisfactory. Assessment information is used particularly well in the Nursery and Reception classes and is used to carefully tailor the work to the needs of individual children and to assess the progress they are making. As a result of these measures and the very good support they receive the children achieve very well. Assessment procedures are also beginning to be used well in English to identify areas of weakness. For example, teachers are using well the information gained from writing tests to support pupils' learning and to raise standards. Pupils are aware of their learning targets, which are reviewed monthly. The school plans to review the way in which it assesses pupils' reading, placing a greater focus on the development of skills. In mathematics there are weaknesses in the way in which assessment information is recorded and the way that is used to inform curriculum planning. Most teachers record pupils' progress against key learning objectives and are beginning to set targets for groups and individuals. Information gained from these assessments is not being used consistently to set appropriate work for all pupils. The school recognises that more work needs to be done and it is identified as high priority in the school improvement plan. Co-ordinators in some of the other subjects of the curriculum, for example art and design, have undertaken an analysis of the standards being achieved but this is not the case in the majority.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. Parents are generally well satisfied with what the school provides. The parents who attended the meeting before inspection were generally supportive of the school and had few concerns. They said that the school had been through a period of extreme uncertainty since the previous inspection but was now improving rapidly under the leadership of the new headteacher. They were impressed by the good behaviour and attitudes to work fostered by the staff. Only about 15 per cent of parents returned a questionnaire but the views expressed there were also positive. Most said that their child enjoyed school and was expected to work hard. The only significant minor concerns were the amount of homework and the extent of extra-curricular activities. The details of the questionnaire responses are given in the table in Part C. The positive views regarding management, behaviour and attitudes to school are confirmed by the inspection. However, their view that academic

standards are satisfactory is not supported, although these are found to be improving. There are sufficient extra-curricular activities for the size of school but the use of homework is not consistent.

55. At the start of this year, the school faced a crisis of confidence, with some parents considering removing their children. The school has worked hard to overcome this and has plans to do even more. Parents of all ethnic groups are made to feel welcome by multi-lingual signs at the entrance and around the building. The school provides parents with good quality of information about the life of the school and, in particular, how well their children are doing. When children start in the Nursery, parents are offered the opportunity of home visits by staff and are invited to stay with children in their first sessions to settle them in. This is particularly beneficial for those who do not speak English. In the Reception classes, parents can also work initially with their child. Parents meet with staff who tell them about the practical aspects of starting school and how their child will be taught. In addition, the school runs model lessons for parents to observe so that they have a better understanding. They are kept well informed of what is happening in school with regular letters. Pupils' annual reports meet statutory requirements, giving brief information about the progress in all the subjects taught. The comments on the pupils' overall and personal development are good and reflect the close knowledge that teachers have. They are supplemented by a termly checklist, which although not requiring any writing by the teacher, gives a wealth of information about the pupils' academic and personal development. Parents are given the opportunity to discuss their child's progress at formal meetings with the class teacher, although about a quarter of parents do not take advantage of this.
56. The involvement of parents in the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Individual education plans are shared with parents, and pupils contribute to the review of their own targets and the setting of new ones. Parents feel that their children are cared for well, that their difficulties are identified quickly and that effective action is taken.
57. While some parents are very supportive of the school and their children, many are not and overall their impact is not yet at the level found in many primary schools. For example, only about half of parents help their child by hearing them read regularly at home and encouraging them to do homework. The school issued a Home-School Agreement and homework policy but has only recently started to monitor the level of parental support. On the other hand, assemblies where pupil achievements are celebrated are well attended. A small group of parents give much valued help in lessons. However, too many parents, particularly of younger children, do not value their child's education sufficiently to send them to school regularly.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. The headteacher provides very good leadership for the school. His commitment to high standards is well reflected in the school's work. Since his appointment at the start of the school year he has successfully tackled a number of difficult challenges, which were contributing to low standards and an increasing budget deficit. He has given a very strong and purposeful lead in establishing high standards of behaviour and a good climate for learning in the school; these now make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning. The headteacher has established a clear focus on raising standards by devising and implementing systems for checking both teachers' and pupils' work, and setting targets for improvement in teaching and learning. The key issues arising from the previous inspection have also been successfully tackled

since the start of the school year. However, further improvement is needed to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English are given enough support to make the same progress as their peers. The school has begun implementing a well thought out strategy for this. Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

59. In all of this work the headteacher has been very well supported by the work of the deputy headteachers. They are both expert in their roles and have brought about improvements in teaching and learning and in the attendance rate through their skilful approach and hard work. Together with the headteacher they form an effective leadership team with complementary skills and expertise which they use to plan continuous improvements in the school. In his commitment to raising standards, the headteacher has been highly effective in making the best use of staff through consultation and discussion. He has won the full support of teachers and all support staff for his vision of excellence for all pupils. The co-ordinators of the Foundation Stage, English and mathematics are particularly effective and make a good contribution to raising standards. While all teachers now feel included in the work of the school and are aware of their role in raising standards and making improvements in their areas of responsibility, they do require further training to help them discharge the responsibilities of subject co-ordinator more effectively. In order to improve their professional skills and to ensure that they make a full management contribution, the headteacher has planned management training for them at the start of the next school year. The strategies for monitoring teaching and learning have the full support of staff and this contributes to the effectiveness of the programme.
60. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The teacher with particular responsibility for pupils with special educational needs maintains all the necessary paperwork as well as she can within the limited amount of release time she has from her class responsibility. As part of the new strategy to meet the needs of pupils who have barriers to their learning, the co-ordinator will have more time away from classroom duties from September, to check the quality of provision for pupils and to support teachers to help pupils make better progress. The school has made some progress towards implementing the requirements of the revised Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs. The school's liaison with outside agencies is effective.
61. The governors now have sound knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the school, because of the improved monitoring systems and the headteacher's detailed reports which keep them informed about developments in the school. They are now fully involved through committees in the strategic development of the school and in the recent past have played a significant part in shaping the direction of the school. For example, in the last school year, when the school was moving into a crisis because of staff ill-health and the worsening behaviour of pupils, the governors supported the acting headteacher's decision to increase staffing to resolve the problem, even though it meant embarking on a planned deficit in the budget. The strategy was successful. It has led to improvements in staff morale and assisted the new headteacher in bringing the learning of pupils at least into line with what is expected. The improved reputation of the school, as a result of highly visible improvements has led to an increase in numbers on roll. This is what the strategy was designed to bring about. The governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met.
62. The school has a satisfactory number of teachers, with an appropriate balance of experience and expertise to teach the curriculum. Teachers' performance is

monitored effectively through the good systems in place and targets are set for improvement. The provision for professional development is good and teachers are benefiting from training to improve specific skills. While teachers and support assistants have well defined roles in relation to pupils' learning, overall there are insufficient support staff to meet the needs of the high proportion of pupils in the school who have special educational needs. However, there are a number of competent support assistants who have a wide range of roles and responsibilities. The school has identified that it is not at present using these staff in the most efficient way to support all the children who have barriers to their learning. A restructuring of the way the support is planned has already begun with the intention that at the start of the new school year this will ensure that the good work of support assistants is more effectively used to benefit to the pupils who need it.

63. The school's accommodation is adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. There are ample, well-planned play areas and the school has a large playing field for games and athletics. Teachers make very good use of pupils' work for display in the classrooms and corridors, and this reinforces the school's message that pupils' work is important and valued. At present the lack of a library is a weakness in the school's provision, which restricts the opportunity for pupils to develop independent research skills and browse through a good selection of books. The provision this year of a room dedicated to computers has improved provision for teaching and learning in information and communication technology. The building is not convenient for wheelchair users. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory overall. They are adequate in English and mathematics, but in science and information and communication technology a shortage of some resources hampers the range of activities for pupils. In other subjects provision varies but is generally less than is needed for good learning. The school has an appropriate range of resources for special educational needs. The situation with regard to learning resources has come about because of the school's necessary focus on staffing which has taken a considerably higher proportion of the school's budget in the recent past than is usually found in schools of this type.
64. Financial planning is sound. The school is successfully reducing its planned deficit and is set to achieve a balanced budget well within the planned timescale. All planning and spending are based on raising standards. The school has good systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of its spending decisions. The financial management of the school is good with effective use made of computer systems to monitor spending. The headteacher and governors are careful to seek best value in what the school does and in what it buys. Given the good climate for learning, the progress that pupils are making and the very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development the school is judged to give satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65. In order to raise standards the headteacher, staff and governors of Aston Tower Primary should:

(1) Raise the standards that pupils achieve in English, mathematics science and information and communication technology by: *

- Improving the quality of teaching and the range of teaching methods used so that pupils increase their concentration when learning, by drawing on the very good practice that exists in the school; *
- Developing the use of assessment so that teachers are confident about adapting the curriculum to suit groups and individuals within their classes;*
- Developing teachers' understanding of assessment data and how this can be used to set sharp targets for pupils' learning. *

(Paragraphs 2 - 7, 10- 12, 28, 29, 32, 53, 113- 117, 122- 125, 135 – 146, 158, 160)

(2) Improve provision for pupils with special educational needs by: *

- Ensuring that the teacher responsible for the co-ordination of SEN provision has enough time to monitor how well individual education plans are being implemented by monitoring the progress of pupils with special educational needs;
- Providing training for teachers and learning support assistants so that they can plan more effectively for the learning of pupils who have special educational needs;
- Ensuring that learning support staff are deployed to target the areas of most need.

(Paragraphs 7, 8, 31, 37, 60, 117, 125, 134)

(3) Improve provision for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English by: *

- Devising a strategy to extend the high quality provision available to children in the Nursery and Reception classes to those older pupils who are not yet fluent in English.

(Paragraphs 9, 68 –71, 74, 117, 125, 134)

(4) Develop the role of the subject co-ordinator so that they have accountability for standards in their subject by: *

- Providing training which will ensure that co-ordinators have the necessary management skills to monitor and improve standards and provision in subjects for which they are responsible;
- Making time available away from teaching for co-ordinators to discharge these responsibilities.

(Paragraphs 59, 146, 149, 155, 159, 165, 170)

The governors should also consider the following for inclusion in their action plan:

(5) Improve attendance, especially in the Nursery and Reception classes by convincing parents of the importance of a good start to their children's learning.

(Paragraphs 18, 50)

(6) Improve learning resources quickly so that pupils currently in the school benefit from better facilities for learning.

(Paragraphs 64, 119, 134)

* These issues are already identified in the school's development plan.

THE PROVISION FOR AND THE STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

What sort of school is it?

66. Approximately two thirds of the children are from different minority ethnic backgrounds. Some of the children are the second or third generation of families who settled in Britain long ago and these children are British by birth and speak fluent English. However, the nature of the school's catchment area is changing and until very recently the largest ethnic minority group was of Caribbean heritage. This group is now the third largest with the largest single group being Bangladeshi, and the second Pakistani. Other groups represented include Chinese, Indian and children of black African Heritage. The main languages spoken in the school are Bengali (Syletti); Urdhu, Punjabi and Cantonese.
67. Approximately 10 per cent of the school population are in the very earliest stages of learning English. Most of the children new to English are in the Nursery and Reception classes. However, there are other children who are at the earliest stages of learning English scattered throughout the rest of school. These include a small number of children whose families are asylum seekers who have suffered much trauma and stress. These pupils are often in temporary accommodation and do not remain on the school roll for very long.

How high are the standards?

68. The attainment of pupils who are in the initial stages of learning English is below that of the rest of the pupils in their class because of their inability to understand and speak English. By the end of Year 2, pupils are comfortable communicating verbally in English in most situations. Many pupils, however, do not yet have a secure grasp of English grammar, nor do they have a wide vocabulary. This has the effect of depressing their results in the national assessment tests at the age of seven.
69. By the end of Years 5 & 6, whilst most pupils who started school in the Nursery or Reception classes are able to make their meaning perfectly clear, many still do not speak grammatically. Lack of fluency in English means that, in those subjects which depend on a child's ability to read, understand and write in English, the standards they achieve are below that of most other children of their age. Whilst this problem is common to most pupils who are learning English for the first time in most schools, it is more marked amongst Bengali boys, who achieve lower standards than other groups of pupils. The school is aware of the problem and is seeking ways to address it.
70. In the Nursery and Reception classes, pupils who are at the initial stages of learning to speak English make good progress, but the rate of progress of these children is less than that of those who come to school speaking English because there is too little bi-lingual support for them. In Years 1 to 6 most children make satisfactory progress in speaking, reading, and writing in English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

71. In the Nursery children who have English as an additional language have a very good attitude to school. From their earliest days in the Nursery, they try hard and are well motivated to learn. They are very attentive and can concentrate for long periods when supported by bi-lingual staff. They take turns and listen well during story time

and are happy to join in discussions often adding comments in their own language. Even from the earliest days, bi-lingual pupils translate for those who are new to English. With adult encouragement, children are happy to attempt speaking in English and quickly acquire enough English to make their needs known.

72. By the end of Year 2, they are confidently choosing friends and working with partners from all nationalities. They share experiences and ideas and join in lessons with confidence. This good approach to learning continues throughout the school.

How well are the pupils taught?

73. In the Nursery, teaching for children at the earliest stages of learning English is very good especially when there is bi-lingual support available. In a very good lesson the bi-lingual support assistant used well thought out questions to encourage the children to speak and sometimes used the children's first language to check that they had understood.
74. In the rest of the school teaching is satisfactory overall. However, the standard of teaching for these pupils is very good when class teachers are adequately supported. An example of very good support for children in the initial stages of learning English was observed when pupils in a Year 3 class were correcting the punctuation in an e-mail. The class teacher was supported by the co-ordinator for English as an additional language who worked with individual children ensuring they understood the task and made specific teaching points about English grammar directly related to each child's needs. As a result the children were able to take full part in the lesson and also made very good progress in all aspects of English.
75. The amount of support available for pupils in Year 3 to 6 who are at an early stage of learning English is not adequate and the school recognises this. In order to improve provision the school has produced an effective and workable strategy which it has already begun to implement. This will make more effective use of the existing support as well as increasing the quality and amount of support available.

How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils

76. Teachers make sure that the curriculum draws on areas of interest to pupils of all ethnic groups. Notices and posters around the school are written in a variety of languages emphasising the importance of including everyone. Special resources are provided to meet the needs of specific groups. For example, children whose parents do not read English are provided with dual language books to take home so that parents can share and enjoy together the stories that their children listen to in school.

How well does the school care for its pupils?

77. The care taken of pupils who have English as an additional language is generally good. All members of staff understand that, for children new to English, helping them to adapt to the school environment is as important as the acquisition of English. However there is too little adult support for them. For instance, the bi-lingual support assistant works two days each week in the Nursery to help settle children into the Nursery and to support them in their learning. For the rest of the week, other three and four year-olds are often the only ones who can talk to the children in their own language. This situation continues throughout the school and, sometimes, pupils are left to struggle through lessons without adult support.

78. The level of English children have is assessed on their entry to school and their progress checked each term. However, at present, this information is not used consistently throughout the school to adjust lessons and activities to help pupils move forward in their learning. The school has plans to improve the use of this assessment as part of its strategy for improving provision for pupils who have English as an additional language.

How well does the school work in partnership with parents?

79. Nursery staff and the bi-lingual support assistant provide good support to children prior to, and when they first start school. For those parents who take their children away from school for extended holidays visiting relatives abroad, the school has produced a holiday work pack to help prevent children from falling too far behind in their learning whilst they are away. Instructions for using the pack are in a variety of community languages to help parents understand its purpose. The school has recently enlisted the help of bi-lingual parents for those pupils who have very little English and start school in the older classes. The co-ordinator and one of the deputy headteachers have provided training for a small number of parent volunteers to work with the children. This good strategy ensures that pupils know enough language to make their needs known and get by in school.

How well is the school led and managed?

80. The co-ordinator for pupils who have English as an additional language, was originally appointed in May 2001. She is very knowledgeable and, since her appointment has helped to raise teachers' understanding of the needs of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, especially those at the earliest stages of acquiring English. She works very closely with the bi-lingual support assistants and the learning support staff and, as a result, all members of staff have become much more aware of the needs and abilities of the pupils. There is however a need for further training for both class teachers and classroom assistants and this has been planned for the coming year. The revision of how support staff are used, to ensure a more efficient and effective use of their time, has been completed, and in some instances support staff have already begun to develop their new role.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	87
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	24	30	27	5	0	0
Percentage	1	28	34	31	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	65	330
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		245

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	10	153

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	299

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	38

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	10.0
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.7
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	20	21	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	16	19
	Girls	12	12	17
	Total	28	28	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	68 (59)	68 (77)	88 (75)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	16	12
	Girls	11	12	7
	Total	27	28	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	66 (61)	68 (75)	46 (61)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	30	22	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	3	6
	Girls	14	10	13
	Total	18	13	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	35 (43)	25 (33)	37 (33)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	5	4
	Girls	11	9	10
	Total	17	14	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	33 (52)	27 (37)	27 (31)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	34
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	51
Bangladeshi	119
Chinese	5
White	20
Any other minority ethnic group	41

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	6	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	1	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.4
Average class size	23.6

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	215

Qualified teachers and support staff: Nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	32.5
Total number of education support staff	3.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	90
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	1,124,675
Total expenditure	1,060,167
Expenditure per pupil	2,726
Balance brought forward from previous year	-116,271
Balance carried forward to next year	-51,763

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	395
Number of questionnaires returned	59

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	19	5	0	7
My child is making good progress in school.	42	46	3	2	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	29	8	2	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	32	15	7	0
The teaching is good.	44	51	3	2	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	29	7	7	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	29	7	3	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	22	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	51	34	12	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	53	32	7	0	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	34	5	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	24	15	5	15

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

81. The excellent quality of education provided for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is a strength of the school and represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.
82. At the time of the inspection there were 137 children in the Foundation Stage. Of these, 29 children attended part-time in the Nursery and 50 children attended full-time. Fifty eight children attended full-time in two Reception classes. When the children start Nursery, their knowledge, skills and understanding are very much lower than expected for their age. Approximately half the children in the Nursery have English as an additional language and half of these are at the earliest stages of speaking English. The current Reception class made satisfactory progress during their time in the Nursery. However, on entry to the Reception class, the assessment tasks showed that the attainment of pupils had remained very low.
83. Since the previous inspection, significant improvements have been made. The school has very successfully implemented the nationally recommended curriculum for children in Nursery and Reception classes. Children in the Nursery now make very good progress because of the wide range of activities that not only promote the development of skills and knowledge, but also help children to learn English. By the time the current children move into the Reception class it is likely that the assessment results will be higher because the children in the two Reception classes have also made very good progress and have made very good gains in all six areas of learning.
84. The planning, which was satisfactory at the last inspection, has improved and is now of a very high quality and themes such as 'Mini-Beasts and 'Out and About' are used very effectively to foster children's progress. Much thought is given to establishing routines and providing interesting activities. Care is taken to identify key words and phrases and the teachers and support staff work effectively together to promote the children's understanding of English. However, the bi-lingual member of staff funded especially to work with children in the initial stages of learning English is in the Nursery only two days a week as her time is shared not only with the Reception classes, but also with Years 1 and 2. This means, that although children at the earliest stages of learning English make good progress, their rate of progress is slower than that of children who are more fluent speakers of English.
85. The work of the Nursery and Reception classes overall has improved since the last inspection because it is now very well led and managed. Staff keep very careful and detailed records of each child's progress. Since the new co-ordinator took over in January 2002, she has extended and built on the very good work carried out by the new Nursery class co-ordinator and there are plans to make further improvements. These include the production of a parents' booklet which encompasses both the Nursery and Reception classes, and there are also plans to extend the outdoor play facilities. These are intended to lead to further improvements to the curriculum and the opportunity for children to make further gains in learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

86. By the end of the Reception year, most children will have achieved the standard expected for their age. They make very good progress in their time in the Nursery and Reception classes because of the staff's high expectations and good organisation skills. The children in the Nursery are attaining higher standards than usually observed because of a pilot scheme that the Nursery has trialled over two years. The scheme is designed to help pupils of all ages with their self-management skills and parents are involved in its implementation and encouraged to reinforce the same high standards as expected at school. The school intends to extend the use of the scheme to the Reception classes in September.
87. Nursery children are helped to settle into the routines of the Nursery quickly because parents and carers are encouraged to stay with them when they first start. This is vital for those children who do not speak any English, because although there are bi-lingual staff, they are not always in the Nursery. When the bi-lingual support assistant is present, she translates conversations and instructions to help the children realise what is happening and join in. The Key Worker system operated in the Nursery helps the children to feel secure as they have their 'own' adult to care for them. The small groups that this system allows for enables children to listen with greater understanding so that they learn to join in songs and rhymes, and to take turns in listening and speaking with a few children whom they quickly come to know very well. The children who have been in the Nursery longest, help the newer ones to settle in. Many occasions were observed when a more experienced Nursery child took another by the hand and led him or her to an activity which they then shared together. The children also help one another fasten aprons when about to engage in messy play.
88. Children concentrate on self-chosen activities for a very long time and often produce high quality play. Whilst some children are still at the stage of playing on their own or alongside other children, many examples of real co-operative play were observed in the Nursery. For example, two girls were working in the writing area and happily sharing the hole punch and stapler and passing each other the different coloured pens when asked. Also, when playing in the 'fruit and flower shop', a little girl bought a bunch of plastic flowers and took them to a member of staff who was working with a different group of children, saying, 'These are for you'. The adult's surprise and pleasure was genuine and she thanked the child very graciously thereby providing a very good role model to the children. On another occasion, three children, two boys and a girl, were working together outside drawing a picture on a large white board. They had evaluated their drawing and were harmoniously discussing which bits needed rubbing out and drawing again.
89. In the Reception classes the children also behave very well both in lessons and in social interactions. They count out the beakers for drinks at snack time and set the tables. They listen attentively in lessons, although sometimes the groups are too large for pupils in the earliest stages of learning English to be able to join in sufficiently. This means that occasionally they get restless during whole-class discussions. When working in small groups at adult-directed or self-chosen activities, however, all children behave very well, concentrate and work hard. High quality play was also observed in the Reception classes where there is a 'jungle' role-play area that both classes share. Seven children were playing together harmoniously inspired by their trip to the safari park the previous day. Four little girls had equipped themselves with clipboards and were intently sketching 'animals'. A little boy was keeping 'look out' with binoculars and scanning the horizon for danger. Two other boys were lying down studying an animal book together and anticipating which animal would be on the next page.

90. The teaching and assessment of this area of learning are of a very high quality because all members of staff know that high standards in personal, social and emotional behaviour will help the children to achieve well in all other areas of the curriculum. The staff observe the children and encourage them to persevere with activities. Their warm, supportive approach engenders a positive response from the children who try very hard to please them.

Communication, language and literacy

91. The skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing of most of the children are below the standard expected for their age by the end of the Reception year. Nevertheless, this represents very good progress from the very low level of attainment on entry to Nursery. This is a reflection of the very good teaching and provision made for the children. The bi-lingual support staff also make a very effective contribution in helping children to understand stories, instructions, explanations and questions and to use new English words and phrases. However, insufficient bi-lingual support remains a weakness.
92. The Nursery is a language-rich environment with bright interactive displays. There is a mixture of writing from both adults and children around the rooms and tatty books have been discarded and replaced with bright new ones. The school continues to place great emphasis on the development of communication skills and enlists the parents' support in this. They send home picture books written in both English and the children's own first language because the staff know that listening to stories read aloud by parents plays a vital part of a child's own reading development. Hearing stories in a familiar language is not only more enjoyable but also leads to a greater understanding of the meaning of the text. Similarly, discussion about the illustrations is best using the child's first language. All the books provided in the Nursery and Reception classes are very attractive and designed to promote an interest in reading. Throughout the inspection children were turning readily to books in their play and sharing them with their friends.
93. In lessons, in both the Nursery and Reception classes all members of staff provide the children with a great many opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. They speak very clearly and give children plenty of time to answer. If children do not understand, they rephrase questions and explanations and repeat the children's answers and summarise discussions, providing good role models of spoken English. As a result the children learn to answer questions in whole sentences.
94. The good modelling of spoken English is continued through into the teaching of reading and writing. A very good example of this was observed in the Nursery when the teacher was showing the children how to make a poster. She used simple sentences to explain every step, such as, "I am writing a title" or "Now I'm using a colouring pencil to draw my picture" and "My picture shows what I can buy in the garden shop". The children follow the actions closely and as a result of the very well staged instruction are confident about making their own poster. They make an extended series of marks 'telling' about the shop and draw their own pictures about what to buy. All the children concentrated very hard and were delighted with their efforts.
95. The children continue to make very good progress with their writing in the Reception classes and by the end of the Reception year most children are writing clearly

formed letters and spelling simple words correctly. Some children are writing up to five complete sentences unaided and know where to place full stops and capital letters. Sometimes, however, the children have to be reminded that writing in English begins on the left. Children are encouraged to read their own writing back to the teachers and this helps with their speaking skills as well as their reading.

Mathematical development

96. Although the children make very good progress in mathematics in both the Nursery and Reception classes, by the end of the Reception year the attainment of most pupils is below that expected for their age because they start from a very low level. There are, however, a small number of pupils who are attaining above average standards especially in number. The teachers recognise these children's skills and knowledge and foster their progress through challenging activities in adult-led group sessions. By the end of the Reception class, these children are able to add to ten in their heads and are beginning to write down sums following a practical activity. When working with shapes, all the children recognise squares, triangles and circles and talk confidently about edges, sides and corners.
97. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, all members of staff place a strong emphasis on number. The quality of teaching is very good and one excellent lesson was seen. The Nursery children count how many are in their group at the start of every session and work out how many children are away. They make repeating patterns when printing and learn to sing a variety of number rhymes and songs. In the 'fruit and vegetable shop' they specify the number of apples and oranges they wish to 'buy' and count out sufficient coins to 'pay' for them. In the Reception class the children set out the correct number of beakers and count the correct number of pieces of fruit for snack time for each group in the class.
98. The staff lose no opportunity to reinforce the children's learning and understanding of mathematical language. For example, when going on a 'bear hunt' the classroom assistant consistently emphasised positional language by saying 'Where is the clue?' 'Is it on the wall? 'What is it next to?' Is it in front of the, or behind the?' A strength of the very good teaching observed is the use of practical activities clearly linked to the topic currently studied by the children. For example, in the Reception classes, to link with their trip to the Safari Park, the teachers provided a variety of plastic zoo animals for children to sort and count. This holistic approach to teaching helps to set the ideas taught in a context that is both very enjoyable and easy for the children to understand. Because the staff make mathematics such fun all the children are very well motivated to learn. They work very hard and concentrate on mathematical tasks for a long time.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

99. On starting school, many children have had very limited experience of the world around them. Their general knowledge is very low. By the end of the Reception year, although attainment in this area is below that expected for children of this age, they have made very good progress. The teachers plan a range of interesting and appropriate activities to enable the children to explore aspects of the world around them.
100. During the inspection, Nursery children were using magnifying glasses to study insects. The children learn quickly and show a great deal of interest, but many do not reach the standards expected because they do not have sufficient spoken English to

enable them to talk about what they observe and to explain why things happen. This is particularly true when children are not being supported by a bi-lingual member of staff as was observed when two children were dissolving a block of soap in a bath of warm water. No member of staff was present at this activity to provide the children with the words needed to help them understand the process that had taken place.

101. In the Reception class, the role-play area helps to foster both children's language skills and their knowledge. Following the visit to the Safari Park, children were observed sitting in the 'jungle' sketching the animals they had seen and using binoculars to scan the horizon. Others were sharing books about jungle animals and anticipating which animal would be on the next page. In this instance, the language of 'the jungle' had been well taught in formal class sessions and during the visit out. As a result the children engaged in very high quality play using the correct terminology.
102. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, the children turn readily to the use of computers to support their learning. During the inspection they were observed playing number and alphabet games on the computer. The children show a satisfactory level of skill when using the computer mouse. They can use click and drag procedures and clearly know what they are doing but found it hard to explain. In a mathematics lesson in the Reception class, the teacher helped the children to use a computerised toy to estimate distances and to help them to make up sums.
103. The teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world is very good. Activities are very well planned and organised to build on previous learning. Most of the activities planned are designed for children to work together. This has a positive impact not only on behaviour and relationships but also provides opportunities for children to communicate with each other. From the earliest days in the Nursery the bi-lingual pupils are encouraged to support those with less skill in spoken English. This not only helps the children to settle in because there is someone they can talk to in their own language, but it is also helpful to the teachers.

Physical development

104. Most children achieve the standard expected in this area of learning and make good progress during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. The Nursery children experience outdoor play almost every day. They are well supervised and appropriate activities are provided. However the outdoor play area is too small and the equipment is limited. The Reception class children have no designated outdoor play space of their own at present. These limitations impinge on the curriculum the staff are able to provide for this area of learning. The staff do their best to overcome these obstacles and have made plans to address the problem as soon as funding will permit.
105. The Nursery children handle wheeled toys confidently. They pedal, steer and manoeuvre the tricycles with ease and play co-operatively when drawing on the large white board provided. The children in the Reception classes try very hard to improve their physical skills and to meet the teachers' high expectations during lessons in the school hall. In the lesson observed the children listened well to instructions and were quick to do as they were told. They clearly enjoyed the lessons and made very good progress. They were able to combine two different movements, change directions on command and move in a variety of different ways using the available space well. They proudly demonstrate their actions to the rest of the class when asked. The other children watched them respectfully and used what they observed in the

demonstrations to help them improve their own performance. In this lesson, as a result of very good teaching the children attained standards above that expected for their age.

106. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, daily activities ensure that the children make good progress in using a range of classroom equipment. Children use scissors, hole-punches, staplers, pens, glue and paint with increasing skill. Many show dexterity and skill in handling small fiddly items such as feather and sequins to enhance their work.

Creative Development

107. Children's creative development meets the expected levels by the end of the Reception class and they make very good progress. This is largely due to the wealth of carefully planned learning experiences they are able to take part in. In the Nursery, the children are given the opportunity to cut, stick, paint, print and draw exploring colour, shape and texture. They are happy to choose their own paper and colours to use when painting. They use large and small building kits to make a variety of buildings and vehicles. In the role-play area they pretend to be shop-keepers and customers and, they learn to use the language needed when shopping effectively. They learn to sing a variety of songs and experiment with musical instruments.
108. These early experiences are built upon very effectively in the Reception classes. In the lesson observed, some children made model animals using 'Soft-mo'. They looked at toy animals and used picture books to get ideas, they thought carefully about how to make a mouth and tails. They evaluated each other's work and made helpful suggestions for improvements. For instance, when looking at a friend's model tiger, a child at the early stages of learning English, said 'He needs that' pointing to the ears on a toy animal. Evaluations also led to feathers being added to a model parrot and pipe cleaners being used for tails of monkeys and tigers. The more able pupils were able to explain clearly to the rest of the class the sequence of procedures they had used to make their models. They were also able to tell their friends the features of their work that they liked best and why.
109. The Reception class children are also able to suggest which musical instruments to use for the noises that might be heard in a jungle and co-operate well to create a musical accompaniment to a favourite action song 'Walking Through the Jungle'. The children attain high standards in both work and behaviour because of the teacher's high expectations and the skilled teaching they receive. The teachers show the children how tools and instruments can be used to best effect, they use praise effectively to encourage and motivate the children and as a result the children rise to the challenges presented and make rapid progress.

English

110. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils are achieving results in national tests that are well below those expected for their age. Their results are well below average in comparison with similar schools. Over the past three years the performance of boys at age seven has been better than girls but this trend is reversed by age 11, when girls perform notably better than boys overall.
111. During the inspection, it was clear from the work seen that over the past year standards in all classes have risen significantly, particularly in writing. Speaking and

listening have improved over the past year and these have supported the improvements in the standards in reading and writing. There has been a particular focus on writing throughout the school and this is driving up standards. Although the overall standards of reading and writing throughout the school are still well below the average, decisive action by management in the school has implemented strategies to raise standards and these are working. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

112. Standards in speaking and listening are below the average but are better than standards in reading and writing for pupils at the end of Year 2. Pupils follow teachers' explanations and instructions closely and most can follow these when they begin to work independently. They enjoy class discussion especially when they are familiar with the topic and can give their own ideas. Standards in reading in Years 1 and 2 are well below average. This is partly due to weaker and interrupted teaching in the past which has left gaps in the range of strategies that pupils are able to use. Pupils' understanding of what they read is best when they read with an adult who can explain new words and give examples of them in context. When they read unaided they sometimes mispronounce or misunderstand words and their progress as independent readers is slowed. Teachers need to be more aware of the importance of identifying individual weaknesses in reading in order to set meaningful targets that will help pupils improve.
113. By Year 2, pupils work on developing extended writing of their own adventure story about Shanti the Zebra. They respond positively to the lessons as they create their own adventures that are based on the story of Shanti and are developing an awareness of writing a good opening to the story followed by imaginative action and choosing a suitable closing statement. A good volume of work is covered in the books over time and pupils are able to see their progress. Weaknesses in their writing include spelling, which is often difficult to interpret because so many pupils are not able to sound out words, presentation, because letter formation is not accurate, and incorrect grammar. By the end of Year 2 standards are well below average in writing, though pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
114. Standards in speaking and listening are close to the expectation for pupils by the end of Year 6. They follow lengthy explanations and instructions closely and show they are actively listening when, for example, the teacher asks in a history lesson, what will be the implications of population movement for employment opportunities in Birmingham. Most are able to give full answers which others add to or challenge to develop a lively discussion, putting forward plausible ideas and convincing arguments. Standards in reading are well below the average for Year 6 pupils. While many can read independently, few show a depth of understanding of what they read or are able to discuss the writer's intentions. Because they have had much interrupted teaching earlier in their education, these pupils have many gaps in their learning which Year 6 teachers have worked hard to overcome.
115. Older pupils write letters on varied topics using persuasive language. They are encouraged to focus on who they are writing to and why, and to consider vocabulary that is appropriate for this type of writing that ranges from complaining about defective seeds to airing their views about why water meters should or should not be fitted to homes. In a Year 5 class pupils are very well motivated by the teacher as they consider the water meter issue and what ideas they will incorporate in their writing. One pupil states that "The whole situation is ridiculous. Birmingham is trying to enter the space age before it is ready for it. What will happen to large families who have water meters and cannot afford to bath every day? This is all because the

water company wants to make money to stay in business.” All pupils in the class become very involved in the debate and the good teaching helps them to manage it well and to listen objectively to both sides of the argument before beginning to write independently. By age 11, pupils work hard on writing extended stories and editing their writing. They share their writing with other pupils and there is genuine delight when one pupil reads his second chapter that has very imaginative vocabulary and challenging ideas that make everybody think hard. Whilst some pupils find the work challenging, the final part in all lessons works well to ensure that everybody understands what has been done and how it can be improved. By Year 6 standards in writing are well below average.

116. Teaching is mostly satisfactory with some of it being good. In the best lessons, the preparation is clear, teachers are knowledgeable and have high expectations and the pace of the lesson is brisk. When teaching is unsatisfactory this is because pupils are not fully prepared by the teacher to work independently on the tasks set and they do not make enough progress as a result. Teachers have worked hard during the past year to improve their planning and their teaching of the National Literacy Strategy and have engaged in a wide range of training to help them do this. Marking is mostly satisfactory and gives positive feedback and suggestions how to improve. Pupils are able to discuss the teacher’s comments in their books and explain what they should do next as they work on developing imaginative ideas and vocabulary. Most pupils are keen to participate in class discussions and to contribute their own ideas, but they have not yet developed sufficient independence to work unsupported when they edit a piece of work to improve it. The teacher and learning support staff give good support and younger pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported by a specialist teacher.
117. Methods of checking pupils’ progress are being developed and each term a piece of unsupported writing is formally assessed. The Birmingham Reading Assessment has been introduced in all classes so that the best strategies can be identified and non-statutory testing of each year group will show over time the progress being made by each pupil. Sound support from teachers enables pupils with English as an additional language who are fluent, to make satisfactory progress, but pupils with special educational needs and older pupils who are at an early stage of learning English do not progress as well.
118. The Literacy Strategy is now being satisfactorily implemented. Teachers are working well together to share good practice and ensure that planning takes full account of pupils’ progress and what they need to learn next. Reading is not yet supported by an adequate supply of books but there are plans and money to make rapid improvements to the library provision in the school. The recent re-location of the library will temporarily help to provide a freely accessible place for children to work with books. However, it offers little scope for expansion and when fully stocked with suitable books and resources it will not be large enough for the needs of a school of this size.
119. Management of the subject is good with good time being given to meetings, in-service training and planning. Over the past 18 months the concerns raised by staff about the teaching of literacy have resulted in an audit of staff needs together with a programme of in-service training. The school is now well placed to raise standards in English and this is confirmed by inspection evidence that shows significantly more pupils reaching the expected levels than did so a year ago.

MATHEMATICS

120. The results of the 2001 national tests for seven-year-olds were very low in comparison with the national average. An analysis of trends in pupils' performance indicates that standards have fallen sharply over the past four years, most notably between 1998 and 2000. Taking the results of the last five years into account, there is no difference between the performance of girls and boys, but during this period the performance of girls, in particular has fallen significantly.
121. The findings of the inspection are that the standards attained by pupils in the current Year 2 classes are well below the national average. This constitutes an improvement in standards in comparison to those recorded in the 2001 national tests. Close examination of pupils' work in Years and 2 indicates that most pupils are making satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactory standards.
122. The results of the 2001 national tests for Year 6 pupils were very low in comparison with the national average. An analysis of trends in pupils' performance indicates that standards have fallen over the past five years. Taking the results of these years into account, there is little difference between the performance of girls and boys, but during this period the performance of boys has fallen sharply whilst that of girls has risen slightly.
123. In response to falling standards the new senior management team put into place a range of measures, which are proving to be effective. These include:
- the targeted support of both higher- and lower-attaining pupils in Year 2 and 6,
 - a programme of revision to prepare pupils in Year 6 for the national tests,
 - rigorous analysis of test papers to identify which aspects of mathematics caused pupils most difficulty, for example, problem solving and mental arithmetic and the curriculum has been altered to take this into account,
 - groups of lower-attaining pupils in Years 3 - 5 were provided with additional support to raise achievement in these classes.
 - targets have been set for pupils in all years – although these are not being consistently used by all teachers.
 - a programme of monitoring and support by the subject co-ordinator, headteacher and numeracy adviser.
124. The findings of the inspection are that the standards being attained by pupils in the current Year 6 classes are well below the national average. This is a similar picture to that recorded at the time of the last inspection. The pattern of falling standards however, has been halted and standards are now rising as a result of the measures described above. Close examination of pupils' work in Years 3 to 5 indicates that most pupils are now making satisfactory progress. This constitutes an improvement from last year when the progress of pupils who sat the national tests was very poor.
125. The progress being made by pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory. In some classes work is not sufficiently tailored to meet the needs of these pupils and as a result they do not make the progress that they should. The progress being made by pupils who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory overall but it is unsatisfactory for the few older pupils in Years 3 to 6, who are at an early stage of learning English. These pupils do not always have the support they need and as a result they do not make sufficient progress.
126. In lessons, most pupils in Year 2 classes accurately count forwards and backwards in 2s, 5s and 10s, although some lower-attaining pupils find this difficult. Average-

attaining pupils have a sound understanding of place value and identify which digit changes when they add or subtract 10 or 100. Higher-attaining pupils successfully add and take away 20 and 200 and explain how to take away 9 or 11 from a given number. Lower-attaining pupils are developing an understanding of the value of numbers but this is not secure. A close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that most have a satisfactory knowledge of common geometric shapes, they recognise shapes with line symmetry and measure lengths in centimetres. There are general weaknesses in pupils' ability to solve problems, subtract numbers and solve simple algebraic sums.

127. In lessons most pupils in Year 6 classes confidently multiply whole numbers by 10 and 100 and identify the value of numbers over 1000. They use the four number operations but many do not have a clear understanding of the value of decimals. Lower-attaining pupils round number to the nearest 10 or 100 but they struggle with work on decimals. They do not have a secure knowledge of multiplication facts, which hinders their progress. Higher-attaining pupils confidently multiply decimals and use a range of strategies to check the accuracy of their answers. A close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that most pupils accurately record their work in charts and on graphs. A particularly good example of this was the collection, analysis and presentation of data relating to the ethnicity of pupils in each class. Pupils calculate the perimeter and areas of shapes and measure the size of angles using a protractor. Many pupils continue to experience difficulties with problem solving activities, in particular those that involve several stages in their calculation.
128. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although it ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. This is a similar picture to that recorded at the time of the last inspection. In the best lessons the work is well planned so pupils of all abilities are able to learn well. These lessons begin with a rigorous mental session or game to engage the pupils in their learning. In a good lesson in a Year 2 class for example, a bright, positive introduction to the lesson gained the pupils' attention. The teacher questioned the pupils well, giving them time to think and answer. Pupils of all abilities were supported well in this lesson and as a result they made good progress in their learning. Teachers often have high expectations of pupils' concentration and effort that encourage them to learn well. In a very good lesson in a Year 6 class for example, the teacher presented the lesson in a lively manner that engaged the pupils' interest. The enthusiasm she displayed encouraged the pupils to become involved in their learning and work hard. She maintained very good control and pace throughout the lesson and as a result the pupils learnt very well.
129. The teachers are effective in promoting mathematical vocabulary and encourage their pupils to explain their work using the correct terminology. A particularly good feature of all lessons is the quality of relationships that are shared between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves. The level of care that the teachers show encourages pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem. In response, most pupils display positive attitudes to their work and want to do well. Teachers' questioning of pupils at the beginning and end of lessons is good at times, but in a minority of lessons it is not used sufficiently well to check what pupils understand or have learned. In their efforts to raise pupils' levels of attainment, teachers in a few classes provide work that is too difficult for the pupils to do by themselves. In lessons where this happens pupils in the groups that are not supported by the teacher often struggle and do not make sufficient progress. It is clear that assessment information is not being used sufficiently well to provide appropriate work that builds on pupils' previous learning. The quality of teachers' marking is variable. In the best examples

it tells pupils the quality of their work and provides pointers for further improvement. In some cases work is not marked or not marked accurately and is not used effectively.

130. Support staff are often used effectively to support pupils' learning, in particular those with special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English. They support these pupils well, using initiative and questioning effectively to clarify their understanding.
131. The curriculum is satisfactory. Throughout the school, pupils are beginning to make use of computers to support their work, for example in data handling. Pupils make some use of mathematics to help learning in other subjects. For example they tabulate findings of their experiments and generate graphs in science.
132. In addition to analysing pupils' performance in national tests the school is also beginning to use the results from the annual non-statutory tests in Years 3, 4 and 5 to set targets and track pupils' progress from year to year. In the classes where this is effective, teachers use their findings to aid the setting of individual and group targets. Evidence from the inspection indicates that assessment is not being used consistently well to help teachers' planning or to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils.
133. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator. She has a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and has a clear view of where improvements need to be made. She has begun to monitor the quality of teaching and has undertaken some analysis of pupils' work. She is aware that a rigorous process of monitoring and review needs to continue. She is a member of the senior management team and contributes well to the school improvement plan.

SCIENCE

134. The 2001 teacher assessments of the attainment of Year 2 pupils show that the percentage of pupils reaching and exceeding the nationally expected level was very low in comparison with schools nationally. National test results for Year 6 pupils were also very low in comparison with other schools. Evidence from the inspection suggests that in the present Year 2 and Year 6 classes more pupils are working at the expected levels and that standards have risen considerably this year. However, they are still well below the national average. There are no significant differences in attainment between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds although girls have consistently performed better than boys in recent years. The great majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in science and in some lessons, progress is good. However, pupils with special educational needs and those at an early stage of acquiring English do not always make the progress that they should because in some lessons they have insufficient support.
135. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are developing an understanding of the world around them and how it functions. They know the names of common materials and some of their properties. From observations and simple tests pupils have found out about the effects of temperature such as water turning to ice or steam. They are aware of the need for a healthy diet and what sorts of food would constitute this. They understand that plants and animals change as they grow. Higher-attaining pupils supply clear oral or written explanations of their investigations. Many pupils however, rely heavily on the support of adults to explain or record what they have found.

136. By Year 6, higher-attaining pupils talk confidently about different areas of science they have studied and in discussion show satisfactory, and sometimes good, understanding. They have acquired a good scientific vocabulary, which the higher-attainers use accurately in appropriate contexts, for example when explaining how to separate mixtures through sieving, filtering, dissolving and evaporation. Others find it difficult to express their ideas orally or in writing because of their more limited vocabulary. They are aware of ways in which organisms are suited to their environment, and are beginning to use keys for identification. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of the effects of gravity and friction. They carry out investigations planned by the teacher and also demonstrate some ideas of their own. Most can make predictions based on their own experiences and show an understanding of how to structure a fair test. However, pupils have had limited opportunity to use their own ideas to plan and carry out their own investigations.
137. Teaching is satisfactory overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory in Years 1 and 2. No teaching was observed in Year 6, but in Years 3 to 5 teaching was satisfactory, although varying from unsatisfactory to very good. Lessons are generally well planned and the aims of the lesson are shared with pupils so that they know what they have to learn. In the best lessons, probing questions are used well to find out what pupils already know and understand and then extend their learning. For example in a Year 5 lesson on condensation, the teacher found out what the pupils remembered about evaporation from an earlier lesson. This enabled them to review their earlier learning and consolidate their understanding that water evaporates into the atmosphere. In a very effective lesson in a Year 3 class, good questioning and high expectations from the teacher ensured that pupils measured carefully, carried out observations and recorded them with precision. The teacher consistently expected clear explanations and this encouraged pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils for whom English is an additional language were very well supported and thus took a positive role in the lesson. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and in other lessons, pupils with limited English or who had special educational needs were not given sufficient support and their progress was unsatisfactory. On occasions, teaching is less effective when explanations are not clear or when work is not well matched to the needs of the pupils. This was the case in a Year 4 lesson when pupils were recording an experiment on friction. Pupils demonstrated a limited understanding of the purpose of the experiment and struggled to complete their written accounts.
138. Most teachers provide good verbal feedback during lessons and help pupils to improve their work. The use of written marking is less consistent. Comments do not always effectively ensure that pupils are aware of areas which need to be improved or to set clear targets for improvement. Pupils' attainment is checked through the use of national tests and teachers also maintain records of their attainment in skills of investigation. However, not enough use is made of this information to match work to pupils' needs and to set targets for individual pupils to assist the raising of standards.
139. Mathematical skills are reinforced in science lessons when, for example, pupils measure and record temperatures and distances. Data handling is used well to record results and pupils draw and plot their own line graphs. Year 6 pupils have made use of information and communication technology to present their work but there is limited evidence of the use of computers to support work in science.

140. The science co-ordinator has only recently returned to school after a long absence. She monitors teacher's planning which is based on the national guidance. However, she has not had the opportunity since her return, to monitor the quality of teaching and learning through classroom observations. Although national test results are analysed, the co-ordinator has not had sufficient opportunity to monitor the standards of attainment throughout the school. Science has been identified as a priority in the school improvement plan and there is a clear action plan in place. The school recognises the need to continue to raise standards of attainment and particularly to develop pupils' investigative skills. The school has reversed the decline in standards that occurred during the period of considerable disruption and has laid a sound foundation for further progress.

ART AND DESIGN

141. By the ages of seven and 11 pupils achieve average standards. Pupils are provided with a good range of opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding and they achieve well. This shows good improvement since the last inspection.
142. By the time they are seven, pupils use a range of tools and materials appropriately. They develop their skills in observational drawing and use these to draw portraits of themselves or still life drawings of fruit and vegetables. Younger pupils use pastels well to blend colours as they create pictures after the style of Monet's 'Morning with Willows'. In a lesson in a Year 2 class, pupils knew the work of significant artists, for example, Freud, Van Gogh and Degas and how they had drawn portraits. Pupils in Year 2 visited the local art gallery to look at old tiles. They made sketches and then designed their own. They transferred their designs to polystyrene and used these as printing blocks.
143. By the time they are 11, pupils carry out a good range of work to build on their skills and techniques, using a wide range of media. A particularly good example was seen in Year 3, where pupils had created self-portraits in the form of a collage inspired by the mask of Tutenkhamun. They had used crayons, pastels and different coloured shiny paper to good effect to create their pictures. As they move through the school pupils continue to develop their knowledge of the work of different artists. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 studied paintings from Picasso's "blue period", evaluating the emotions and feelings associated with the colour blue. Working with teachers from the local secondary school, pupils in Year 6 pupils took photographs of the local area and made preliminary sketches of the local landscape. In a lesson in a Year 6 class, pupils were developing skills in making stencils and using them to create repeating patterns using a stippling technique.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons, teachers effectively assess what pupils have remembered and then build on their previous work. Teachers often set high expectations and manage the pupils very well and in response, pupils listen and behave well and concentrate hard. Teachers focus very well on the development of skills. This was to be seen in a Year 2 lesson where pupils were being taught to use line to create form through light and dark, and again in a Year 3 lesson where pupils were learning skills of blending colours. In a Year 6 lesson the teacher effectively demonstrated how pupils could develop stencils and how to stipple to get the best effect. In all the lessons observed teachers were unfailingly supportive and encouraging of the pupils' efforts. In response pupils tried hard and were proud of their achievements.

145. The subject co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and provides sound leadership. She has undertaken a detailed analysis of pupils' work and use of sketchbooks and has a clear vision for the development and improvement of the subject. There is good guidance to underpin the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. There are currently no procedures for checking the standards pupils achieve as they move through the school although teachers are beginning to collect samples of work. Resources for art are adequate and are easily accessible to both teachers and pupils. The school has a policy for display and this is reflected in the positive way in which pupils' work is presented around the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

146. The standards attained by pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 are below average. This is below the levels achieved at the time of the previous inspection when pupils attained in line with the expectation. The decline in standards is due to a lack of time being allocated to the subject in favour of literacy and numeracy, as well as the impact of interrupted teaching in the past. Because of the shortage of time given to the subject, progress is unsatisfactory, although one project in Year 3 on making a sandwich showed good processes, where pupils recorded every step of the project including evaluation of the outcome and how they would improve it. Younger pupils have made a salad but their display did not include sufficient information about the process they followed and any evaluation they had done of the outcome.
147. One lesson only was observed, where pupils in a Year 4 class explored pneumatic systems with a view to making a working monster. Pupils showed an interest in the work but did not follow closely what they were asked to do. Numerous experiments that had not been planned occurred when they worked with syringes. Though some progress was made, pupils' overall attainment was unsatisfactory because their inappropriate behaviour was not managed effectively.
148. The current situation is largely a result of low priority given to the subject in practice. A new co-ordinator has been appointed following a lack of co-ordination and the school has identified the subject as a priority area for the next school year. The proposed action plan has identified important issues such as writing a policy, undertaking an audit, arranging in-service training for staff and setting up monitoring procedures. The co-ordinator and other staff are aware that the current situation is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient focus in the subject and progression in pupils' learning is consequently unsatisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

149. Standards achieved by pupils in geography at the end of Year 2 are average. By the end of Year 6 pupils' standards are below average because during this year more time has been allocated to literacy and numeracy. An analysis of work in Years 3, 4 and 5 shows that pupils cover a satisfactory range of work and reach the expected standards. Overall this represents an improvement since the previous inspection.
150. Work in books and folders shows that pupils make satisfactory progress, though in lessons observed during the inspection pupils' progress was judged to be good. By the age of seven pupils have a sound knowledge of the features of the school, the local environment and the natural world. They make maps and plans of the school and the local area and their route to school, drawing on knowledge gained from walks around the school the school grounds, and the local area. They study the daily weather and learn about weather in other parts of the world, making good use of CD-

ROMs and the Internet to see weather in other countries. They follow directions and use positional language when exploring their surroundings. They are very aware that the world extends beyond their own locality, through their study of an island in Scotland and their first-hand knowledge of many countries of the world. Pupils compare life in these places with life in Birmingham.

151. Year 3 pupils investigate four different places in the world. They use a variety of secondary resources to find out what life in each of these. This gives pupils an opportunity to attempt individual research on a simple level. Year 4 pupils improve their mapping skills by making a map of a town and identifying features using symbols. Pupils in Year 5 carry out an in-depth study of the water cycle. Using a good collection of photographs to stimulate the pupils' interest the teacher discussed how climate might affect the daily life of people living in different parts of the world. They know where Birmingham receives its supply of water and how it is carefully cleaned before use. Year 6 study erosion in a coastal town making a good link with literacy by writing a report on damage to a coastal village after a storm.
152. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good both inside and outside the classroom. They show a keen interest in the subject, sometimes producing work at home. In lessons pupils are always willing to help each other and work well co-operatively in groups. This was illustrated well in a Year 1 lesson when a group of pupils worked with a classroom support assistant to set up a travel agency.
153. Teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory and is satisfactory overall. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good and they promote the development of geographical skills. Their planning is satisfactory and their management of pupils is good. Most lessons finish with a discussion in which there was good consolidation of learning. From their comments and answers to the teacher's questions pupils show that they have listened and understood the substance of the lesson.
154. The subject leader took charge of geography in September 2001. She has rewritten the policy and organised a complete scheme of work based on the latest curriculum guidelines. The subject leader has not had the opportunity to check teaching and learning but collects teachers' planning and looks at samples of pupils' work. There is some use of information and communication technology for research. Resources have been reorganised but the subject leader is well aware of improvements which are needed as soon as the school's finances improve. Assessment of the pupils' work is at an early stage of development.

HISTORY

155. The standard of work seen was average for pupils of seven and 11. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Progress in pupils' learning is sound. By the end of Year 2, pupils broaden their knowledge of historical events and pupils know about famous people from the past including Mary Seacole, Guy Fawkes and the first astronauts to land on the moon. They also study circumstances that lead to change and learn about the effects of change on people's lifestyles. In a good lesson seen pupils considered the use of electricity at school and at home. They thought about items like washing machines, irons, sewing machines and a light bulb. Good discussion and questioning led them to think about what people had used in the past before electrical appliances were used and they enjoyed looking at an old sewing machine and smoothing irons that were used over the fire or a cooker.

156. By the end of Year 6 pupils have broadened their knowledge and understanding of the past. Pupils in Year 4 study the Ancient Greeks and investigate what their buildings are made of. One pupil used the internet to find information but had insufficient time to work with the search engine to find the answers he sought. Year 6 pupils learn to use facts and figures upon which to base deductions and opinions. In good lessons they compared sources of information to identify patterns of population change in Birmingham over the past 50 years. Clear, well-paced teaching enabled them to use census statistics, maps and street registers as they considered patterns of migration. These lessons promoted effective historical research and analysis of data and included numeracy skills when pupils worked with census totals spanning a number of years.
157. A considerable amount of the work is oral, but displays, discussions with staff and a scrutiny of planning show that the teaching of history is satisfactory overall, with good teaching seen in Year 6. Planning ensures that coverage is sufficient to enable pupils to make sound progress in their learning. The planning also allows teachers to broaden the knowledge of their pupils and to address chronology and the use and sources of evidence. Assessment is done at the end of topics and mainly records what pupils have covered in the topic.
158. The management of the subject is satisfactory. An action plan has been produced but this has yet to be agreed. It identifies the need to improve resources, monitor the planning and teaching of history and to develop links with the Literacy Strategy and writing. A portfolio showing examples of work from each year group is also planned. The proposed action plan shows thought and insight to the needs of the school and will help to raise standards further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

159. Since the previous inspection, standards in Years 1 and 2 have risen and at the end of Year 2 standards are average, but in Year 6 standards are below average. All pupils make good progress due to the systematic teaching of specific skills. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have made particularly good progress since last September and standards are set to improve.
160. The standards attained in Years 3 to 6 have been adversely affected because the ICT suite was unsuitable for whole class teaching. The new suite, which allows whole-class teaching, has only been operating since September 2001. The timetable allows pupils to spend only a short time each week in the suite, and few pupils have access to a computer at home. Given these circumstances, their achievements in computer skills are remarkable. However, computers are not yet used sufficiently in other subjects across the curriculum for pupils to practise the skills they have learned.
161. Throughout the school, pupils are well motivated, behave responsibly when using computers and show much enjoyment in their own progress. The more able pupils act as 'computer buddies' for the less able, and those who are bi-lingual help to explain the teachers instructions to the children who are at the initial stages of learning English. Pupils make good progress in learning to handle the computer mouse, to use the keyboard and to use the different functions on screen. By the end of Year 2, pupils know how to use a range of programs. In the lesson observed most pupils were able to log on, open up a program and knew how to change from lower to upper case letters and insert line breaks. Pupils know how to add designs to their work, choose and change colours and use the flood-fill tool. They can save and print out their own work and eagerly wait for it to appear.

162. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils' skills improve rapidly. Year 3 pupils know how to access the internet and can receive and send e-mails. Year 4 pupils know how to add text boxes and symbols, and can draw flow charts and are learning to use control technology. In Year 5, pupils create spread sheets and present information in a variety of different graphs. In Year 6 pupils produce advertisements and promotional material, write newspaper articles and newsletters. They are able to use search engines competently and most can insert maps and flags into a power point presentation. All of these computing skills have been acquired over a very short time and pupils have not yet had sufficient opportunity to use them independently to enhance work in the other subjects of the curriculum.
163. Teaching is satisfactory overall but the quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. In the very good lessons, the lessons are well planned, the teachers are well prepared and have appropriate resources to hand. They make the learning intentions clear to pupils and insist on high standards of both behaviour and work. They use the correct terminology, check the pupils' understanding by asking well-thought out questions. In the unsatisfactory lessons observed, the teachers fail to check pupils who talked when being given instructions, they spent too much time with individual pupils and failed to keep an overview of what was going on in the rest of the room. These lessons proceeded at a slow pace and fail to maintain the pupils' interest.
164. Management of ICT is satisfactory. Up until the current term, the headteacher has been acting co-ordinator and has been responsible for some rapid improvements in provision for ICT and for drawing up a three-year plan that the present co-ordinator will implement. The plan includes training for all staff using a Government grant and implementing procedures to check pupils' progress. The present co-ordinator started work in the school at the beginning of the current academic year and took on the role of co-ordinator at Easter. She is aware of the weaknesses in the subject, and has already drawn up a system for assessing pupils' progress and given a presentation to the school governors outlining the plans for improvement.

MUSIC

165. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in their learning and their attainment by the age of seven and 11 is average. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English find the subject quite difficult, although other pupils try hard to help them understand the specialist language. The previous report found it difficult to make a judgement on standards.
166. By the age of seven most pupils sing tunefully, although a few tend to shout in their enthusiasm, and, as a result sometimes sing out of tune. They have a good memory for the words of different songs, and are able to sing louder or softer in response to signals and add actions and movement to the rhythms. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils showed a good understanding of sound in their compositions. Pupils in Year 3 produced an accompaniment to the basic tune of a song they had composed in their previous lesson. As pupils in Year 5 listened to a recording of Handel's Water Music they made a list of words that came to mind, such as trickling, flowing, cascading and erupting. Pupils in both Year 6 classes work well to produced a graphics score using at least eight musical instruments. Younger pupils in the school performed for parents on Mother's Day. During the inspection the enthusiastic singing of the school choir in an assembly was warmly applauded by all present.

167. Pupils' attitudes to music are good. Most pupils work with interest and sustain their concentration well. They enjoy their music making and respect each other's ideas and contributions.
168. During the inspection the teaching was never less than satisfactory with teaching in the majority being good and in one lesson it was judged to be very good. Teachers set clear learning objectives for each lesson and are confident in the areas of music that they cover. In the very good lesson in Year 3, very high expectations for pupils' concentration and co-operation, coupled with very effective teaching methods and interesting learning resources, resulted in very good learning. An opportunity to perform at the end of the lesson enabled the teacher and the pupils to assess their new learning. In all lessons teachers make every effort to make music enjoyable.
169. Owing to recent staff changes the headteacher co-ordinators the subject at present. The policy and scheme of work are under review and assessment is in an early stage of development. Music makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has potential for further improvement in the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

170. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils achieve average standards. However, a significant minority of pupils do not achieve appropriate levels of competence in swimming. In all other areas of the subject pupils achieve well. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
171. In a lesson in a Year 2 class, pupils displayed satisfactory levels of co-ordination and control as they balanced on different parts of their bodies. The pupils effectively combined various movements, travelling forwards, backwards and sideways on the floor and benches showing good awareness of the space around them. Higher-attaining pupils displayed good skills when jumping from benches and performing forward rolls. In another Year 2 lesson, pupils displayed satisfactory levels of control as they aimed to hit a target with a bean bag.
172. In dance lessons in Year 6, pupils demonstrated satisfactory levels of precision, control and fluency in their performances. They moved in imaginative ways responding well to the rhythm, speed and mood of the music. The pupils worked well in pairs and groups, developing and refining sequences of movements. In a games lesson led by two police officers, pupils in Year 6 displayed satisfactory hand to eye co-ordination as they passed a rugby ball to each other. In the same lesson pupils showed that they had a clear understanding of the principles of attack and defence and worked well as members of a team.
173. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers ensure that the pupils are fully warmed up at the start of lessons, but do not always remember to cool them down at the end. Lessons are well planned and structured to include all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are well catered for in their lessons and are well supported by teachers and the learning support assistants. For example, a boy in Year 2 who has Downs Syndrome was fully involved in the class gymnastics lesson and achieved well. Teachers display good subject knowledge through their explanations and directions to pupils at the beginning of lessons. Teachers use the pupils' performance well to demonstrate good movements and ideas, and this enables others to see how they might improve their work. As a result of the teacher's high level of management skills

the pupils work hard, at a good pace and progress well in their learning. Pupils have positive attitudes to this subject and enjoy working individually and in groups.

174. The school has satisfactory guidance to help teachers' planning. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is generally satisfactory provision for the teaching of all elements of the National Curriculum. However, the school recognises that there is more work to be done in raising pupils' achievement in swimming. There is a satisfactory range of sporting clubs provided during and after school which are well attended and enjoyed by the pupils. A group of 12 pupils, both boys and girls, enjoyed developing dance routines to a piece of Indian music.
175. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has worked hard to support staff in developing their teaching and to create good teamwork that has improved pupils' learning. She has good knowledge of the subject and uses after-school sporting activities well to extend opportunities for pupils. The provision for outdoor and adventurous pursuits is satisfactory, although the co-ordinator has plans to extend the provision further. The current action plan contains the intention to introduce assessment to improve pupils' own knowledge of their learning and to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

176. Religious education is taught in accordance with the Birmingham Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils attain satisfactory standards of attainment by the ages of seven and 11. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection.
177. Younger pupils develop knowledge and understanding about being a member of a faith community and the effects of a belief on family life. They recognise special family times, especially those related to their family and the role of adults. Pupils in Year 2 know that people of faith make special journeys to places of religious significance. Pupils were very keen to join in the discussion and several pupils could tell all the class about Hajj and why people want to visit Mecca. All pupils in the class listened with great respect and showed genuine interest in learning about the importance of pilgrimages in the religion of their friends.
178. Year 3 pupils produce posters on what they think faith is. Year 4 pupils study the creation story as told in different religions. The teacher suggests we have a duty to look after the local environment in the present day and pupils make a good link with their literacy studies as they write a letter to a friend persuading them not to take their environment for granted. Year 5 pupils learn through religious stories that many people see God as a spiritual authority, a giver of revelations and an authority. Pupils show by their answers to questions and the comments they make that they think deeply about religious stories and attempt to understand the purpose of them. Year 6 pupils are challenged by their teacher to examine a series of religious pictures and try to interpret their meaning. Small groups of pupils discuss the pictures and say what the artist painted and what he was thinking as he completed the painting. Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 develop an understanding of the practices and beliefs of the major world religions and this is enhanced through the celebration of the main festivals such as the Chinese New Year, Christmas, Diwali, Passover and Eid. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, although pupils who have recently arrived in England have difficulty understanding what is required of them.

179. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and in over half the lessons observed it was good with one lesson being very good. Lessons are well planned. Teachers are careful to avoid dogma and give respect to artefacts and beliefs, even when not of their personal belief. Teachers tell faith stories well with regard to spiritual content. They encourage pupils to consider all the main features of the story, especially the feelings and emotions of the key characters. With clear learning objectives are shared with the class and they use pupils' own knowledge to make cross-faith links, for instance between Islam, Judaism and Christianity, their sacred texts and prophets. Generally, teachers maintain a good pace and have high expectations that lessons will contribute to pupils' personal as well as academic development.
180. The subject leader took over in September 2001. She has already reorganised the resources and made them easily available to all teachers. Her action plan for the next twelve months includes a review of the policy and the scheme of work. She is also aware that the subject needs more resources as soon as the school's finances improve. The subject makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.