

SHORT HEATH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Willenhall, West Midlands

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104188

Headteacher: Mr D Drewe

Reporting inspector: Mrs S E Hall
21750

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd March 2001

Inspection number: 207247

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Pennine Way Willenhall West Midlands
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Howe
Date of previous inspection:	14 th September 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21750	Mrs S E Hall	Registered inspector	Art and design Music	The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning How well the school is led and managed
19335	Mrs S Dixon	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
18342	Ms M Spark	Team inspector	English Equality of opportunity Special educational needs English as an additional language	.
8358	Mr A Blank	Team inspector	Science Design and technology	Quality and range of curricular and other opportunities
19897	Mr A Evans	Team inspector	Geography History Religious education	
15223	Mr R Salt	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a junior school in Willenhall in the West Midlands, with 267 pupils aged seven to eleven which makes the school slightly larger than many schools. The majority of the pupils live in the immediate area of the school and have attended the adjoining infant school. Attainment on entry from Key Stage 1 is average. Approximately 14 per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. Five pupils speak English as an additional language and 94 per cent of pupils are of white ethnicity. There are 69 pupils on the schools' register of special educational needs (SEN) which is average, with eight pupils having a statement of SEN, which is above the national average. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a school where standards in most subjects are average and where the quality of pupils' learning, and the progress that they make is satisfactory. The role of the governing body has improved since the previous inspection. The leadership and management of the school is satisfactory, as is the quality of teaching. The school no longer has serious weaknesses in the quality of education provided and is giving satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The provision for pupils' social development is very good and that for moral development is good.
- The provision for and teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The teaching of pupils in Year 6 is good.
- The attitudes of pupils to their work and to school are good as is their behaviour and pupils enjoy harmonious relationships with each other.
- The governing body is working in an effective manner.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching where it lacks a sufficiently high level of challenge.
- The use of assessment information in the planning of lessons.
- The quality of the monitoring and evaluation of planning, teaching and learning.
- The quality of the accommodation in order to provide a suitably quiet learning environment.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The last inspection of the school, in September 1998, reported that there were serious weaknesses in the quality of education provided. There has been satisfactory, if sometimes slow, improvement in establishing a clear educational direction for the school. There has been good improvement in the quality of the professional partnership between the governing body and the senior management team. There has been some progress in the effectiveness of curriculum delivery and the use of assessment. However, more remains to be done to ensure that curriculum planning is cohesive and that full use is made of assessment information in the planning of lessons to meet the needs of pupils who make different rates of progress. The school was required to, and has, improved the provision for pupils' spiritual development. There has been satisfactory improvement in the quality of the partnership between the parents and the community. The school complies with new arrangements for performance management and therefore meets the requirements for staff appraisal. Whilst the quality of teaching has remained largely as previously there has been satisfactory improvement in most key areas of the school's recent development.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E	D	C	C
mathematics	E	D	E	E
science	E	C	D	D

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

The National Curriculum tests for pupils aged eleven in 2000 show that attainment in English was average, that standards in mathematics were well below average and those in science were below average. These test results show attainment to be alike in comparison with all other schools and with similar schools. In 1999 the attainment of pupils had been below average in English and mathematics and average in science. There has been no consistent trend in improvement. Standards in mathematics have been consistently lower over several years than in other subjects. The attainment of pupils now in Year 6 is higher than suggested in the last national tests. Inspection findings show that standards for the group of pupils now at the end of the key stage are average in English, mathematics and science. These findings indicate standards have improved, especially in mathematics. The planning of mathematics lessons is better, particularly since the appointment of a new mathematics co-ordinator. Whilst most pupils make satisfactory progress in all subjects some higher attaining pupils are capable of making further progress when provided with a high level of challenge. The school makes good provision for all pupils with special educational needs and these pupils make good progress towards targets identified for them in their individual education plans. At the age of eleven standards are average in all subjects except in design and technology where they fall below national expectations. School targets in 2000 were for 80 per cent of pupils to achieve Level 4 in English and 76 per cent in mathematics. These were met in English but not mathematics. The targets for 2001 for 86 per cent to meet the national expectation in English and 70 per cent in mathematics are demanding.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good, most pupils like coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate well even in areas which are noisy.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour in classrooms and at play is good.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils get on well together and undertake the responsibilities that they are given well and with growing maturity.
Attendance	Average. The large majority of pupils attend school regularly and arrive punctually but a very small minority attend on an irregular basis.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 7-11 years
61 lessons seen overall	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.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, which maintains the findings of the previous inspection report. Teaching was very good in 11 per cent of lessons observed, good in 39 per cent, satisfactory in 43 per cent and unsatisfactory in 7 per cent of lessons. The sample of pupils' work confirms the quality of teaching seen during the current academic year and reflects recent improvements in mathematics, where teaching is now good. The teaching of English is satisfactory. Teaching is best in Year 6 where it is consistently good. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and make good progress in Year 6. A strength in the teaching is the good management of pupils, which ensures that lessons are conducted in a purposeful and disciplined manner, even in noisy shared areas. The support and teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Almost all other aspects of teaching are satisfactory although the marking of pupils' work is sometimes cursory. The teaching of the skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory with the teaching of numeracy improving recently. However, teaching in several subjects across the school lacks imagination and pace. The use of formal assessment is limited. The planning of lessons does not take sufficient account of what the pupils already know and there is a lack of consistent challenge for the higher attaining pupils particularly in Years 3, 4 and 5. The quality of pupils' learning and the progress that they make as they move through the school is satisfactory overall and good in Year 6.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is suitably broad and mostly well balanced although staff have become aware of the need to monitor the access to a balanced curriculum for pupils attending 'booster' classes. Curriculum planning for each year group uses a different format and this makes the monitoring of curriculum coverage difficult.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The quality of teaching and support is good. Individual education plans are well written and provide a clear outline for lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	All pupils are included within the school's curriculum and their educational inclusion is assured in all activities through appropriate access to all learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for social development is very good and that for moral development is good. The provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory although staff miss many opportunities to extend this further.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. The personal support and guidance for pupils is appropriate but the use of assessment information in planning and teaching is unsatisfactory.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory. The school has worked to bring about improvements in links with parents but there remains a perception by some parents that more could be done to involve and inform them in the life of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. Staff have worked to establish a more focused direction for the development of the school. Whilst the school has not always acted with rigour to address previous issues for improvement, there is now a will to bring about further changes and raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body is ably led and has worked with resolve to establish their role in school development planning by working in partnership with the staff to bring about improvements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. The school has now established procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of planning, teaching and learning. However, monitoring lacks rigour and has been unsatisfactory. Evaluation has not been specific enough to ensure that teaching provides a sufficient level of challenge to raise standards further.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school makes good use of funding and support staff for pupils with special educational needs. The school has appropriately established the principles of 'best value' in its spending decisions.
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	Satisfactory overall. There is an adequate number of staff and resources are generally satisfactory. The quality of the accommodation is unsatisfactory and learning is adversely affected by excessive noise in open-plan areas.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most parents think that children like school. • Many parents believe that the school expects the pupils to work hard. • The majority of parents think that behaviour is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A greater range of extra-curricular activities. • More information about how their child is getting on. • A closer working relationship between home and school.

Inspectors generally agree with the positive views of parents. Most pupils enjoy coming to school, they are expected to work hard and behaviour is good. Inspectors feel that the range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and that the school is working to improve the links with parents including the quality of school reports and arrangements for discussions with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Inspection findings show that the pupils in Year 6 are attaining average standards in English, mathematics and science. This maintains the findings of the previous inspection in 1998 and reflects some improvement since the follow up visit by Her Majesty's Inspectors in 2000 and the last national tests. A relatively small percentage of pupils are on track to exceed the level expected of eleven year olds in these subjects. In some lessons throughout the school there is a limited amount of challenge for pupils with higher attainment and this limits the progress made. Standards are not always as high as they could be. Whilst the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress, some higher attaining pupils are capable of making better progress and achieving more. The school has recognised that attainment in mathematics has not been high enough and since the appointment of a new mathematics co-ordinator progress in mathematics has improved and is now good.

2. Many pupils have attended the adjoining infant school and assessment data from Key Stage 1 shows that at the age of seven attainment is average. The school has data available but does not fully exploit the possibilities for links with the infant school to ensure that pupils get off to a flying start when entering the junior school. Staff do not make the best use of information indicating the proportion of pupils attaining higher than average standards in Key Stage 1. Subsequently the school does not always ensure that a high enough level of challenge is provided as pupils move through the school.

3. In the Year 2000 National Curriculum tests, a good proportion of pupils achieved the expected Level 4, particularly in English and science. However, there was a much smaller proportion of pupils than seen nationally achieving the higher Level 5, particularly in mathematics. The national test results of the last three years indicate that overall standards have been below average. Whilst in some years attainment has been average in science or English in other years, especially in 1998, attainment was well below both the national average and that of schools in similar areas. During this period attainment in mathematics was consistently below that in English and science.

4. There has been no consistent trend of improvement in recent years. However, school information indicates that there is a greater proportion of pupils with special educational needs than in the past. In the 1998 inspection of the school there were thirty-five pupils on the school's register of special educational needs (SEN) with four pupils with a statement of SEN. Currently there are sixty-nine pupils on the register, with eight pupils having a statement. The changing demographic influences in the area have an effect on the standards of attainment.

5. The school has set targets for the attainment of pupils when they leave the school at the age of eleven. Targets in Year 2000 were for 80 per cent of pupils to achieve Level 4 in English and 76 per cent in mathematics. These were met in English where 82 per cent of pupils reached Level 4 or above but not in mathematics where only 63 per cent reached the target. The targets for 2001 are for 86 per cent to meet the national expectation in English and 70 per cent in mathematics. These targets are very demanding and it is unlikely that the school will achieve them. However, the school is making suitable use of available funding to support booster activities for pupils who are approaching the nationally expected levels. This results in other pupils of higher and lower attainment being taught together for some lessons which makes planning difficult and does not always provide a high enough level of challenge for all pupils. The school is wisely considering how to maximise the pupils' achievements.

6. Assessment information indicates that in recent years boys have done better than girls in national tests, although this is not such a strong feature over a longer period of time. The school has little information to indicate why this sometimes occurs. Inspection findings indicate that a noisy learning environment may inhibit some quieter pupils' learning and relatively few older girls offer ideas in class discussions.

7. The progress of the relatively small number of pupils with English as an additional language matches that of their classmates. The school has identified very few pupils who are particularly gifted and talented. The level of expertise offered by support staff working with pupils identified as having special educational needs ensures good progress for these pupils towards the specific targets in their individual education plans.

8. Standards in all aspects of English are average throughout the school although there are some weaknesses in writing. The speaking and listening skills of pupils are in line with the expectations of pupils of this age. Most pupils have a satisfactory grasp of spoken English and use an appropriate vocabulary to describe what they know or think. The standard of pupils' reading is average. The majority of pupils are able to use an appropriate range of strategies to work out what unfamiliar words say although some are hesitant readers. Further progress in reading is, in part, inhibited by the lack of a whole school system of taking reading books home to maintain or extend pupils' levels of interest in reading. The range of fiction and non-fiction books in the school does little to develop a love of reading. The standard of pupils' writing is average, with the quality of the presentation of pupils' handwriting often being neat and careful. However, the content of pupils' writing and grammatical accuracy is very variable. The progress that pupils make in all aspects of their English work is satisfactory.

9. Standards in mathematics are currently average which indicates an improvement from that seen in recent years. This is largely due to the improvements brought about recently by the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, particularly since the appointment of a new subject co-ordinator. She has begun to work closely with colleagues to improve the level of challenge identified in planning. The high quality of the teaching of mathematics in Year 6 is having a significant impact upon the currently good levels of progress made by the oldest pupils. Pupils are developing their mental mathematics skills well and several are able to make their calculations speedily.

10. Standards in science are also average and have improved since the last national tests. Science has been the main curriculum focus in the school recently. The time made available for the subject co-ordinator to take part in monitoring and evaluating the quality of planning, teaching and learning is helping to strengthen experimental science. This is boosting the pupils' skills in carrying out investigative activities.

11. In Year 6 pupils are currently attaining average standards in all subjects other than design and technology where standards are below what they should be. However, the school has identified the planning and teaching of design and technology as a secondary focus for development in the school and has started to look at the quality of planning and teaching in the subject. Whilst the design element of work is currently under-developed, plans are in place to address this issue.

12. Whilst standards in information and communication technology are broadly average, further progress is limited by the ineffective use of computers to support day-to-day learning in some classes. The school does not have a large number of computers but even where these are available they are not always used in lessons. Standards in religious education match the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. There are few specific strengths or significant weaknesses in pupils' attainment.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. The attitudes, values and personal development of the pupils are good and a strength of the school. This maintains the findings of the previous inspection. Parents also feel that this is one of the most positive features of the school. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and this has a positive effect upon their learning. They enjoy coming to school and they show interest and enthusiasm in all that they do. In lessons pupils respond well to challenging and stimulating questions and many can provide full and confident replies. For the most part pupils listen well to their teachers and each other and instructions are followed very quickly and quietly. Pupils throughout the school maintain a high level of concentration and productivity throughout the day despite the distractions and high noise levels from adjoining classes.

14. Pupils work independently in lessons and by the time they reach Year 6, when there are opportunities they use reference books well for independent research. Pupils work very well in groups, for example in a Year 4 physical education lesson where pupils developed their racquet and ball skills, taking it in turns to act as bowler. In lessons pupils help and encourage each other and show genuine appreciation for the success of others. Pupils' work is valued and their work is displayed in their classrooms with some of this display enhancing the pupils' self-esteem.

15. The behaviour of all pupils is good and contributes well to the happy and purposeful atmosphere that exists. Pupils behave consistently well in lessons, assemblies and at lunchtimes. They understand and follow the school rules well and receive praise and reward with pride. Misbehaviour is rare and when reminders about unacceptable behaviour are given they are effective. Pupils treat the resources and equipment they use in a sensible way and take care when tidying up at the end of lessons. There have been three fixed-term exclusions in the past year. These have been accompanied by appropriate procedures and support for pupils on their return to school.

16. The relationships amongst members of the school community are generally good. Adults in school usually treat pupils with care and respect. In turn pupils are polite and helpful towards each other and to adults. At playtimes they mix and play sociably. During the inspection no conflict amongst pupils was seen although parents report that a small number of incidents of bullying do occur. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are encouraged to act responsibly and are all provided with many opportunities to carry out class duties or to serve the whole school community. Pupils are given opportunities in lessons and assemblies to express their opinions and feelings and they develop a considerate and respectful attitude towards others. For example pupils show their awareness of the plight of others by organising events to support the work of chosen charities.

17. Levels of attendance are now average. For the majority of pupils, attendance rates are good. They are eager to come to school and they usually arrive on time. There are a small number whose attendance gives cause for concern. For these pupils the effect upon their learning is considerable. The school provides clear messages about the importance of regular attendance. For the most part pupils' absences are due to childhood illnesses and to a small amount of holiday taking in term time. This too has a detrimental effect upon pupils' learning. Registration time is brief and efficient and leads promptly into assembly and the first lesson.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and enables most pupils to make satisfactory gains in their learning as they move through the school. This matches the judgement of teaching seen in the previous two inspections of the school and in that observed in the follow-up visit of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Teaching is better in Year 6 where it is consistently good and very good in almost a third of lessons observed. During the week of the inspection teaching overall was very good in 11 per cent of lessons, good in 39 per cent, satisfactory in 43 per cent and unsatisfactory in 7 per cent. Whilst there are some weaknesses in the teaching of some aspects of foundation subjects, there

are now several strengths in the teaching of mathematics. The quality of pupils' learning and the progress that they make reflects the quality of teaching. Progress is generally satisfactory and often good in mathematics. However, the limited pace in some lessons and lack of challenge for some pupils does little to further enhance the quality of learning.

19. The satisfactory quality of teaching is reflected in the sample of pupils' work over the current year. This indicates that, whilst the planning of lessons is sound, it does not always offer a specifically high level of challenge for the pupils, especially those with above average levels of attainment. The school organises the teaching of several activities for sets of pupils based on levels of prior attainment. This is a good strategy, but the planning of activities within sets is often the same for the whole group. Whilst in other subjects some work is planned for pupils who make different rates of progress, sometimes this is not clear and not enough demands are made of pupils. Where teaching is best, as in Year 6 and in Year 5 swimming, teachers make very clear their high expectations. However, these high expectations are not always seen throughout the school. Some teachers accept pupils' efforts without always indicating how to improve the quality of work.

20. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented in a satisfactory manner and the quality of English teaching is never less than satisfactory. In literacy lessons shared work is well taught in most classes and the summary sessions at the end of lessons are generally used productively to consolidate and extend learning. Across the school teachers provide opportunities for pupils to discuss the purpose of the different types of writing they study as seen when analysing the success of texts and writers in evoking responses in the reader. Where teaching is good in Year 6 staff organise a discussion of the effectiveness of a poem about a 'special box' and encourage pupils to use specific descriptive language. This leads to pupils making good progress in contributing ideas about rhyming couplets, alliteration, onomatopoeia and allegory. This raises the self-esteem of pupils and encourages them to try even harder.

21. The National Numeracy Strategy has also been implemented in a satisfactory manner and there have been improvements in the current year, particularly since the newly appointed co-ordinator has begun to work with colleagues to improve the quality of lesson planning. The teaching of mathematics activities is good, with most lessons having a good structure that involves a whole class activity, group work and a summary session. Some mental agility activities are taught well with a high degree of pace and challenge and with good use of white-boards to re-inforce the tasks undertaken. This motivates the pupils and sets the tone for the rest of the lesson. Where teaching is good, staff encourage the pupils to explore and investigate different ways to solve problems and try out different strategies. The summary session is used well by teachers of the oldest pupils to assess whether stated learning objectives have been achieved. There are examples of pupils using their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum, but such activities are not promoted as often as they could be. In addition computers are not being used as much as they might be to support and enhance pupils' numeracy skills.

22. The main strength in teaching is in the generally good management of pupils. Most teachers have good relationships with pupils and value their contributions and ideas. Even when the background noise from other lessons affects the quality of the learning environment most teachers maintain a good level of order and discipline in the class as noted in practical investigations into which shoes will slide down a ramp illustrating the effect of materials and forces. In most lessons teachers make clear what the pupils are to do, although not all teachers share or display the learning objectives of a lesson. Where this is done it provides pupils with a good focus for their work and helps them extend the knowledge of their own learning.

23. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects that they teach and of the needs of the pupils are satisfactory. The planning of lessons is usually secure although on occasion this is vague. Very occasionally too little subject content is reflected in some lessons, as seen when a history

lesson became largely a technology activity where pupils made a pyramid but with little understanding of what a pyramid was. On occasions lesson planning lacks the necessary clarity to move the pupils on in their learning and this limits the progress pupils make.

24. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The teaching of a neat form of handwriting is often effective but the inadequate use of reading materials to support work at home limits the further development of reading skills. Whilst the teaching of several foundation subjects, such as music and art and design, is satisfactory, more could be achieved if a more imaginative range of activities were undertaken. Not all teachers have a high level of confidence in their own skills, including in information and communication technology, and this is sometimes reflected in relatively low expectations of pupils and limited usage of available computers.

25. The methods that teachers use are generally satisfactory. There is a balance of whole class, individual and group activities. Most teachers have good awareness of pupils and offer a good level of support as they move around the class. Sometimes when teaching is unsatisfactory, however, teachers are too static in their approach and simply issue instructions to some pupils that affects the learning of others. The use of time in lessons has been an issue noted in previous inspections and remains an issue in some lessons observed. Several teachers dominate the introductions of lessons and find it difficult to achieve a balance between giving information and involving pupils in meaningful discussion or practical activities. The introductions to some lessons are too long and whilst most pupils maintain a good standard of behaviour several lose concentration, and take little active part in the first half of several lessons. This is most noticeable for some older girls who appear to be at the fringes of several lessons either because of the seating arrangements in class or the lack of specific questions to involve them in the lesson. This limits the progress that some pupils make.

26. The use of support staff and the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. The work provided within class is well matched to pupils' needs, and in literacy and numeracy lessons meets the requirements of their individual education plans very effectively. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils with special educational needs and this is very effective in raising pupils' self-esteem and modifying behaviour. The work of the special educational needs co-ordinator is very effective in supporting planning and boosting the progress that pupils make.

27. One of the main weaknesses in teaching is the lack of dynamism, imagination, pace and flair. The use of resources is satisfactory but rarely imaginative. In some lessons there is little use of external stimuli to really interest the pupils. Whilst the display of pupils' work is satisfactory, more could be done in using artefacts and display to fire the pupils' imagination and creativity. The quality and use of ongoing assessment is satisfactory but variable. Where teaching is good, as in Year 6, teachers give well considered verbal feedback to pupils so that they are clear about what they have done well. In other classes particularly in some groups in Year 5, there is a much greater emphasis on negative feedback and what the pupils have not done well. A small number of parents express their concern over how this affects other pupils. At times the very loud chastisement of pupils is heard by three classes of pupils and is unacceptable. The quality of the marking of pupils' work is also variable and often cursory. Several teachers fail to identify in a supportive manner exactly what the pupils need to do to improve their work. The lack of a systematic approach to homework was identified at the time of the last inspection and the school has now instituted an effective system that involves the use of a homework diary. This sets out clearly what pupils have been set for homework, communicates this to parents and provides an opportunity for teachers and parents to communicate about pupils' progress. Even with this, opportunities for parents to hear their children read are not fully exploited.

28. Whilst the overall quality of teaching has remained largely as seen in previous inspections there is consistently good teaching in several classes where teachers have adopted a calm and supportive working relationships with the pupils. A start has been made in monitoring and evaluating

the quality of teaching although this has lacked rigour and involved few staff in conducting the observations. In some respects monitoring has failed to identify and address some of the long-standing issues raised in previous inspections. However, the school has recently and rightly identified the need for a major review of monitoring to involve all staff by identifying and building on the good practice where it exists and tackling the difficult issues and weaknesses where necessary.

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

29. The curriculum provided by the school is broad and balanced. Since the last inspection the school has reviewed the amount of time given to individual subjects and this has resulted in a generally sensible and appropriate allocation. Currently there is no specific time allocation for information and communication technology as this nominally takes place within other lessons. But this does not always occur on a regular basis. The school has clear plans to change the organisation of activities in the future when the school has a computer suite and classes will then be timetabled to use computers on a regular basis. The overall time used for teaching is very slightly below the national average and the school is considering the possibility of creating a third teaching session in the morning to supplement the regular literacy and numeracy sessions. This would have a positive affect on curricular provision. The time available is mostly used well and during the inspection the movement of pupils between sets and classes was efficient.

30. At the time of the last inspection, extra-curricular activities provided outside the normal teaching time were few. Since then the school has worked hard to provide a range of clubs including gardening, drama and sports. Some parents have expressed some concern about the amount of provision, but it is satisfactory both in quantity and range. There are satisfactory arrangements for the planning of activities in personal and social education, including sex education and drugs education, although sometimes the school misses opportunities to involve the local community further in such activities. There are satisfactory curriculum links with the adjoining infant school but more could be done to extend liaison about the curriculum. There are good curriculum links with the local comprehensive school.

31. In the second term, some pupils in Year 6 are identified to follow a 'booster' programme of work that concentrates on English, mathematics and science to prepare them for the national tests taken in the summer term. For these pupils the curriculum becomes narrow whilst their contemporaries continue with the normal range of subjects. The school does this with the best intentions to raise the standards achieved by the pupils and consequently the school. The system limits some pupils' access to subjects for this time; however the subjects missed are given greater emphasis in the summer term after the examinations and so over the year the balance is broadly satisfactory. When pupils were asked about this arrangement, they were complimentary about it, emphasising how much they enjoy working in smaller groups and how it was helping them to improve. The school is aware of the need to monitor such arrangements closely.

32. The school has generally satisfactory arrangements to support equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum for all pupils. The educational and social inclusion of pupils is usually assured. Curriculum planning for pupils with special educational needs is generally good. The work provided within class is well matched to these pupils' needs, and in literacy and numeracy lessons meets the requirements of their individual education plans very effectively.

33. The curriculum is planned using national guidance for schools where it is available and in religious education the syllabus agreed for Walsall schools. This results in a curriculum that meets statutory requirements. Teachers use the national guidance to plan their lessons that in literacy and numeracy are both specific and detailed. The school has adopted both these strategies successfully in what is taught and how it is taught. However, the school is in an interim period of planning in some

other subjects, using a combination of previous schemes of work or new national guidelines. As yet the school does not have recently reviewed and school-specific planning for some foundation subjects including art and design, design and technology and music. Whilst the school tries to make use of medium-term planning based on previous schemes of work allied to new national guidelines the school is now aware that such systems need to be cohesive and clearly reflected in updated school-specific schemes of work.

34. In literacy and numeracy there are systems for short-term, weekly or daily planning. In other subjects there is no whole-school system in place and this leads to inconsistency in both style and quality. Some short-term planning is detailed and thorough, but in other cases there is little or even no short-term planning to direct teaching and learning and lessons are planned directly from medium-term planning. There is an important need to improve planning at this level. For instance in science the need to identify very specific directions for the use of equipment and development of practical skills in most lessons is important if pupils' ability to carry out investigations and experiments is to improve. The lack of cohesive planning systems is similar in design and technology, geography, art and design and music. The identification of practical or underlying skills and their inclusion as specific learning objectives is crucial to the school's continued improvement.

35. The overall provision for pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school makes satisfactory provision for the pupils' spiritual development, which is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. A key issue of that report, to improve urgently the promotion of the pupils' spiritual development, has been satisfactorily addressed. The teachers have received relevant training from the local education authority and they seek to provide opportunities for the pupils to reflect on ideas. In religious education lessons, Year 3 pupils have thought about how buildings can evoke feelings in people and how they are sometimes built in memory of special people or events. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have discussed feelings and they have written some effective poems about happiness. Year 5 pupils have thought about people who show care and concern for others. During the inspection, examples were observed of the teachers promoting good relationships with the pupils and raising their self-esteem. Whilst examples were seen of teachers instilling a sense of awe and wonder into learning, such as Year 6 pupils observing the action of a tuning fork on a tennis ball in a science lesson. Opportunities to extend spiritual development are, however, sometimes missed. Acts of collective worship make a satisfactory contribution to spiritual development on themes such as encouragement and freedom allied with the need for rules. Achievement is appropriately celebrated in 'good work' assemblies, although the emphasis on large numbers of pupils being involved limits the individuality of such celebrations.

36. The school continues to make good provision for the pupils' moral development. Parents are supportive of the school's code of conduct. The pupils discuss the conduct which they deem appropriate for their classrooms and this are clearly displayed. The pupils are made well aware of the difference between right and wrong and they are clear about the sanctions for inappropriate behaviour. Some individual education plans for pupils on the special educational needs register include appropriate targets to improve behaviour. Some lessons emphasise morality. In religious education, the pupils understand the meaning of the parables of Jesus and they know about the temptations to which He was subjected in the Wilderness.

37. Provision for the pupils' social development is very good and has improved from that noted in the previous inspection. Most parents believe that the school helps their children to mature and to become responsible. There are many opportunities for the oldest pupils to assume responsibility. They help efficiently with the book club, the club selling stationery items, the tuck shop and with registers. Other pupils help in the school library.

38. There are good opportunities for the pupils to develop social skills including participation in extra-curricular activities, the Year 6 leavers' concert, school visits and a residential visit to Malvern.

The pupils are encouraged to show concern for the environment, through participating in a gardening club, a young ornithologists' club and a wildlife explorers' club. The pupils have helped to plant trees in the school grounds and they are encouraged to recycle aluminium cans. Social skills are fostered well in the cash cafeteria. The teachers encourage concern for less fortunate people and the pupils have responded well by generously supporting charities such as National Children's Homes and Comic Relief. They are currently collecting used stamps for the Blue Peter Appeal for Peru. Social skills are developed through electronic mail links with a school in Halifax. The teachers provide many opportunities in lessons such as design and technology, science and information and communication technology for the pupils to develop social skills through collaborative work.

39. Provision for the pupils' cultural development continues to be satisfactory. About forty pupils take advantage of regular instrumental music tuition and members of the school choir have performed at the annual town hall carol service. Recent artwork has been stimulated by good links with Walsall's New Art Gallery and the pupils are familiar with the work of some famous artists. Visiting theatre groups have enhanced learning about the cultures of the invaders and settlers who have helped to shape Britain. The pupils learn about the cultures of ancient Greece and Egypt. The teachers strive to make the pupils aware of and appreciate the diverse cultures of Britain and the world at large. In religious education lessons, the pupils learn about the major world religions and they have visited the local church and gurdwara. In art, they have had the opportunity to appreciate the work of Australian aborigines

40. The school has a satisfactory range of learning experiences to ensure that pupils' personal development is catered for. This is enhanced by the responsibilities pupils are given for the tuck shop, bell ringing and other duties as part of school life. Pupils use the immediate environment for local studies in history and geography. Good links are forged with the local library and art gallery to enrich pupils' learning. Links with the local comprehensive school are good and this helps to make the transition to secondary education smooth for older pupils. In their final year pupils travel to Malvern for field studies in a residential setting; this forms part of a fitting and valuable end to their primary education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The school provides a safe and caring environment where pupils feel confident and happy. This maintains the findings of the previous inspection. Parents feel that pupils new to the school are well integrated and that the school raises pupils' self-esteem well. The procedures for the recording of pupils' academic and personal development are satisfactory.

42. The school has satisfactory arrangements for the care and protection of its pupils. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory and this represents an area of improvement since the last inspection. All the issues previously raised have been addressed well. There is a suitable policy in place and regular risk assessments ensure that matters of concern are identified and dealt with efficiently. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of their own safety and to act responsibly. Whilst pupils are well cared for and the staff are sensitive to the needs and circumstances of all pupils in the school the procedures for child protection are unsatisfactory overall. There is no school policy and appropriate written guidance for all adults in school is not provided. The member of staff with this responsibility is suitably trained but insufficient information is conveyed to all the other members of staff, including those in support roles.

43. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. There is a clear system of rewards and sanctions. Codes of conduct are displayed in school and well understood by all. Both good and inappropriate behaviour are recognised. Pupils themselves are pleased that their parents receive letters of commendation as well as those raising concerns. The good personal

development of pupils plays an important role in supporting good behaviour. Pupils consider the issues surrounding bullying in personal, social and health education lessons.

44. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. The school meets statutory requirements with regard to the publishing of attendance figures and in the registration of pupils each day. The administrative arrangements are efficient and attendance rates are closely monitored. Where attendance causes concern the school works closely with the education welfare service to bring about improvement.

45. As a result of the school's effective provision, pupils with special educational needs generally have good attitudes to learning and they work with concentration both within small groups and with individual support. The assessment and monitoring of support for pupils with a statement of special educational needs is good. Record keeping to aid the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is thorough and the co-ordinator tries to involve parents closely at all stages.

46. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' academic performance in the core subjects. This process begins with the results in national tests at Key Stage 1, which provide indicators for future performance. As pupils progress through the school, teachers make informal assessments through observations, discussions with pupils and the marking of work. Assessment information is part of the process which ensures the early identification, and support of pupils with special education needs. More formal assessments are made through reading tests in Years 3 and 5 allowing progress to be measured over that period. The results in non-statutory tests in English, mathematics and science for Years 3 to 5 provide attainment yardsticks against which pupils' predicted progress is compared. There are few arrangements at present for the formal assessment of progress in the foundation subjects.

47. The use of assessment information to improve curriculum planning is not consistently developed and is unsatisfactory. The recent review of science has improved the way data from the non-statutory tests is used to guide teachers in their planning. Impetus for improvement in mathematics has been provided by the newly appointed co-ordinator for the subject who has ensured that the school has a common approach to planning. However, procedures are not yet fully developed for the feeding in of performance data effectively to inform planning and so measure the impact of the National Literacy or Numeracy Strategies. There are shortcomings in the assessment of English where there is no consistent record of progress in writing skills or evidence of the use of data to monitor skill development in reading. The monitoring of the curriculum through the analysis of assessment data is not as yet having a significant effect on standards of attainment.

48. The headteacher has begun to assemble a useful bank of assessment information using electronic formats. Test results have been analysed with the help of the local education authority and used for target setting and the development of booster sessions to improve standards, particularly in mathematics. The headteacher has a clear view on how to support pupils through a system of individual target setting in the core subjects but clear and individualised targets are not yet identified for each pupil. The intention is that these targets will be discussed with parents and extended to include self-assessment by pupils. The school has identified that this process will eventually be applied to all areas of the curriculum. The school is making satisfactory but slow progress in developing this system of monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The parents' views of the school are satisfactory, as at the time of the last inspection. Most parents are pleased with the happiness of their children at school and the teachers' high expectations for their children. They feel that the school promotes good behaviour well. Some parents have expressed concern about the provision of activities outside lessons and the information about how

their child is getting on. Some also feel that the school does not work sufficiently closely with them. Inspection findings support the positive views of parents. The range of activities provided for pupils outside lessons is satisfactory although not all extra-curricular clubs are offered to younger pupils. The partnership with parents is satisfactory overall and the information provided for parents about their children's progress is also satisfactory.

50. The effectiveness of the schools' links with parents is satisfactory and the quality of such links has been maintained since the previous inspection. Parents feel that the teachers are approachable and responsive should they have any concerns. Parents are invited to seasonal assemblies and special events. Meetings are held to provide information about Year 6 tests and transfer to secondary school and in the past successful events have informed parents about the literacy and numeracy initiatives. However there are generally insufficient opportunities for parents to gain insight into their children's learning or regularly to take part in the life of the school or the celebration of their children's successes. Some parents feel that arrangements for discussions with teachers could be improved. A weekly assembly recognises good work and behaviour, but at present the organisation of this important event focuses on large numbers of pupils rather than on the quality of pupils' work and parents do not share in it.

51. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory. A small number of parents are able to offer to help in the classrooms and with extra-curricular clubs. The recently formed parents' association provides good support for the school.

52. The quality of the information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school brochure, governors' report and letters are well written and keep parents well informed about the day-to-day life of the school. Parents have expressed a wish for greater information about the curriculum and the work that their children will be doing in the term ahead. The provision of such information at present is very limited. Reporting on pupils' work and progress is made at consultation events and through an annual written report. Written reports are satisfactory. They provide some information about the work that has been done. Successes and areas of difficulty are identified to some extent. Parents have indicated that they are not happy with the present computerised format and the school has good plans in place to remedy this. In future written reports will be more personal and will provide clear targets for improvement that will allow parents to provide better support.

53. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning at home and at school is satisfactory. The provision of homework is satisfactory and benefits from a home school diary that makes requirements clear to both parents and pupils. Homework is generally well supported. Parents have expressed a wish to provide more help at home with reading. Reading books and a suitable recording system are not always provided at present. This limits home support and restricts pupils' progress in reading generally. Parents, showing their commitment to their children's education have very well supported the home school agreement.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The overall leadership and management of the school is satisfactory and has improved since the inspection of 1998 when this was poor. At this time the governors and school management lacked a sound professional partnership. This had resulted in unsatisfactory progress being made to overcome some of the weaknesses identified in the first inspection of the school in 1995. Over some time the school had struggled to develop a clear educational direction for improvement and to manage the change necessary to bring about further development. Governors and staff now work well together and a satisfactory agenda for improvement has been established. Whilst the school is on occasion unsure of which of a series of developments to prioritise and exactly how to drive the school forward, there is now a will to look towards the future rather than dwell upon issues in the past.

55. A very important area of improvement has been the establishment of a largely new and effective governing body since the time of the last full inspection. The governing body is ably led and the establishment of committees including the finance committee has led to improved lines of communication between senior staff and governors. The minutes of meetings show that governors have developed the role of 'critical friend' of the school well by holding it to account for the decisions made. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Governors now play an active part in helping to shape the direction of the school through development planning and are well aware of both the strengths and weaknesses in the school.

56. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely together as the senior management team in a generally satisfactory manner. They have established and maintained good pastoral care and a good ethos in the school. Implicit in many aspects of development is the valuing of pupils' social and moral development. On occasion in the past this has been at the expense of a determination to promote the further raising of attainment but, through staff becoming more familiar with developments in the wider educational world, this is improving. Whilst the school has been quite slow to respond to some of the identified issues in the past, the rate of recent improvement has recently been better and is now satisfactory. Senior staff are establishing a much clearer focus for school leadership.

57. The senior management team is aware that, as a long established team in a school with mainly long serving staff, changes have been necessary. Staff have sometimes found it difficult to drive through the necessary changes and establish corporate working practices, focus and rigour in management procedures. Generally speaking throughout the school there is now a shared commitment to improvement and a growing capacity to succeed. There is a satisfactory delegation of responsibilities to staff but as yet the opportunities to develop their roles are not fully established. Members of the senior management team have a vital role in leading the school forward; the headteacher is assessment co-ordinator and the deputy headteacher curriculum co-ordinator. There has been a recent awareness of the need rigorously to review and update curriculum planning to feed into lesson planning and to make better use of the range of assessment information available.

58. The school has established satisfactory procedures for the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. The headteacher has undertaken some monitoring of teaching using agreed criteria. However, this monitoring has not been rigorous enough to identify and help eliminate some long standing weaknesses in teaching identified in the two full inspections of the school and in a follow up visit by Her Majesty's Inspectors. These inspections identified weaknesses in the level of challenge offered to pupils and in a lack of pace in lessons, which did little to move the pupils on in their learning. However, all staff are now aware of the need to extend monitoring systems and the possibility of engaging all staff in evaluation procedures as a strategy to identify and build upon the good practice where it exists.

59. The monitoring and evaluation of planning and learning is similarly under-developed and often unsatisfactory. Whilst the deputy headteacher is nominally curriculum co-ordinator and all subject co-ordinators have access to curriculum planning, this has not been rigorously evaluated. Whilst careful curriculum planning exists in some subjects or parts of the school there is no common format for medium-term planning and this makes it difficult to monitor for consistency and to ensure that teaching builds in a progressive manner upon what the pupils know, understand and can do. Similarly few staff have the opportunity to undertake in-depth and rigorous review of pupils' learning either through direct observation or through the careful scrutiny of pupils' work. This has made it very difficult for subject co-ordinators to be fully aware of whether standards are high enough in the subjects for which they hold responsibility.

60. The school has satisfactory procedures for the induction of staff new to the school although there have been very few recent appointments. The school has appropriate procedures for

performance management and is very keen to extend the opportunities for staff to undertake further in-service training in different areas. Senior staff are aware of the possibilities of changing areas of subject responsibilities in order to re-invigorate teachers' knowledge and understanding of different subjects.

61. Educational priorities are well supported by careful financial planning as noted in the most recent school audit. The headteacher has maintained good systems of financial planning which are managed effectively on a day-to-day basis by efficient administrative staff. The headteacher and chair of the finance committee carefully monitor financial planning, and are keeping a watchful eye on the current small budget deficit. Additional funding and specific grants are used well, including that for the support of pupils with special educational needs. Funding for 'booster' activities is managed well, and satisfactory use is made of funding to support in-service training. The school has plans to extend this further. The school has established the principles of 'best value' in all its major purchases.

62. The management of special educational needs is very good, and there is very effective, caring provision. The co-ordinator has developed procedures for early identification of need very effectively. She is directly responsible, together with class teachers and outside agencies, for compiling each pupil's individual education plan and is fully involved in reviews and assessing pupils' progress. The provision of support staff for pupils with special educational needs is good although there is only a small amount of general classroom assistant support. There is good liaison with outside agencies ensuring high quality support for pupils with physical disabilities.

63. There are a satisfactory number of suitably qualified staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. There are ample administrative and ancillary staff to ensure that the school runs efficiently and that all pupils are well cared for.

64. The accommodation is generally well maintained and provides a safe, clean environment for pupils and staff. However the accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. There have been improvements both internally and externally since the last inspection. The grounds are in good order and much hard work has been done by staff and pupils to develop wildlife areas and gardens. Internally there are suitable office and staff facilities. The school hall is sufficient to meet the needs of physical education lessons and to allow whole school assemblies. However the organisation and use of classroom accommodation is unsatisfactory. Most classrooms are open-plan, with little or no provision for a quiet working environment. This has a considerable and detrimental effect upon the learning environment for both pupils and their teachers. The present arrangements create considerable noise carry over from class to class and this has a distracting effect making it difficult for pupils and some teachers to hear and be heard.

65. The resources provided to support pupils' learning are satisfactory overall. There have been improvements in the resources provided for history, geography and religious education. The provision for information and communication technology is limited at present but the school has well advanced plans to improve this situation with the development of the library to include a computer suite. The number and quality of fiction books both in the library and in classrooms is poor. This has a detrimental effect upon reading in general and the support that parents can offer their children at home. The library offers an inadequate amount of reference material to support the needs of the school and to promote independent learning. The use of information and communication technology and CD-ROMs for research is also inadequate at present.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the quality of education that the school provides the governing body, headteacher and staff should

- (1) Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that the planning of lessons specifically identifies a high level of challenge for all groups of pupils including those who make different rates of progress (paragraphs 19,23,24,77);
 - improving the use of time in lessons to provide good pace through a balance of teacher instruction and pupil involvement (paragraphs 25,75,85);
 - ensuring that the quality of on-going assessment through verbal feedback and the marking of pupils' work is detailed and supportive (paragraphs 27,78,102).

- (2) Using the knowledge and understanding of pupils gained through assessment procedures more effectively to:
 - regularly track the progress that pupils make particularly in English, mathematics and science (paragraphs 78,81,90);
 - inform planning, teaching and individual and group target setting by establishing a sharper focus on the use of assessment data (paragraphs 47,48);
 - improve the arrangements for pupils to read regularly at home and develop a dialogue with parents through an established system of reading records (paragraph 8,53,71).

- (3) Provide regular and planned opportunities to undertake rigorous and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school by:
 - enabling the headteacher, senior management team and subject co-ordinators to scrutinise planning in all subjects to ensure this builds in a continuous and progressive manner as the pupils move through the school (paragraphs 31,59,73,84,94,101,108);
 - carrying out regular observations of teaching using recognised criteria to ensure that teaching is based on best practice (paragraphs 28,58,79,127,131);
 - providing subject co-ordinators with regular opportunities to carry out in depth scrutiny of pupils' work to secure consistent progress (paragraphs 73,84,103,108,116,122,135).

In addition the school should consider the following issue for inclusion in its action plan:

- improving the quality and use of the school accommodation to ensure that teachers and pupils are provided with a quiet working environment (paragraphs 27,64).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

61

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

31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	11.4	39.4	42.6	6.5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	267
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	34
Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	69
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	94.1
National comparative data	94.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	37	31	68

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	29	28	36
	Girls	27	15	26
	Total	56	43	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (66)	63 (62)	91 (74)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	28	36
	Girls	25	18	26
	Total	55	46	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81(63)	68 (54)	91 (69)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1.9
Indian	1.5
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0.4
White	94
Any other minority ethnic group	3.4

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.2
Average class size	29.7

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	100

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	439,287
Total expenditure	439,683
Expenditure per pupil	1,605
Balance brought forward from previous year	-7,612
Balance carried forward to next year	-8,008

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	269
Number of questionnaires returned	77

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	36	8	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	49	10	4	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	48	6	3	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	51	13	6	0
The teaching is good.	32	57	9	1	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	40	26	14	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	36	47	12	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	45	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	14	49	22	12	3
The school is well led and managed.	30	43	12	6	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	55	8	4	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	34	31	18	4

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Several parents do not feel that the setting of homework is well organised or that they are well informed of the progress that their children are making. Some parents do not feel that the school works closely with them or that there is an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

Other issues raised by parents

A small number of parents of pupils with special educational needs feel that the school is not always able to provide an adequate amount of support.

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

ENGLISH

66. The school has maintained the average standards noted at the previous inspection. By the age of eleven, pupils' attainment in English is broadly in line with that found nationally, although there is a weakness in writing of which the school is aware. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the key stage and this progress is accelerated in Year 6 because of the high quality of the teaching. Although a significant minority of pupils on entry to Year 6 showed a level of attainment that was below the expectation for their age, the highly focused and challenging teaching is likely to result in their achieving national average standards by the end of the year. When compared to similar schools standards match those of others in their age-group. The school's results have improved significantly over the last two years from a low point in 1998.

Speaking and listening

67. Standards in spoken English are in line with national expectations. Skills are developed effectively in class discussions where many teachers use questioning well to extend the pupils' use of English and to introduce new vocabulary. Not all teachers plan enough opportunities into the lessons, however, to allow pupils to practise and consolidate their skills effectively within group tasks or through drama, debate or making presentations in different subjects of the curriculum. Nevertheless, some good examples of this practice were seen during the inspection. Pupils in Year 3 discussed in pairs how to complete an electrical circuit using a range of different materials and conjectured about the likely outcome of their tests. Other pupils in Year 3 spoke confidently to peers at the end of a literacy activity about the work they had accomplished during the lesson. Older pupils have some experience of speaking to a large audience in special assemblies, for example Harvest, but these opportunities are not well developed or very frequent.

Reading

68. Standards in reading are similar to those of most seven-year-olds when the children enter the school and by the end of Key Stage 2 standards in reading are in line with national expectations. The higher-attaining pupils in Year 3 demonstrate an enjoyment of reading and respond well to humour or interesting content. They read fluently and expressively and talk about aspects of their books they particularly like. They use their knowledge of phonics and picture cues to work out unfamiliar words but rarely use contextual or grammatical cues. They enjoy literature, talk enthusiastically about the plot and characters, and make simple predictions. They know the meaning of 'title', 'author', and 'illustrator'. Pupils have limited experience of non-fiction books but locate information reasonably quickly, using the index and table of contents. Average readers are much more hesitant. They read without expression, and basic word-building skills are insecure. They are reluctant to discuss their books in any detail and have a much narrower experience of reading in the home. Below average readers have a basic sight vocabulary, recognising a few words but they are unable to use their knowledge of phonics to tackle unfamiliar words.

69. Whilst at the end of Key Stage 2 standards in reading are in line with national expectations, progress across the key stage is not consistent. Pupils read a suitable range of books, and many read independently, with expression and understanding. The introduction of books during the literacy hour is having a significant impact on pupils' interest in reading as they experience a wide range of literature in a variety of forms. The school is striving hard to drive standards forward through specific support for lower-attaining pupils, and for pupils with special educational needs. This is having a considerable impact on the attainment of these pupils. Pupils who receive support through the additional literacy strategy are making particularly good progress as a result of high quality teaching.

They are rightly very proud of their achievements. The literacy hour is having a significant impact on standards, particularly in Year 6, and for lower attaining pupils in Year 5, where the teaching is of consistently high quality.

70. The range of fiction books in the classroom libraries is poor. Many books are in a shabby condition and this is an inappropriate example to give to children in order to develop a high regard for the value of books. The school has an attractive reference library although the range of books is limited and is insufficient to meet the needs of older pupils who wish to research projects. Many pupils use the excellent facilities offered by the Community Library at the local comprehensive school where pupils are able to borrow from the wide range of books available. This facility is restricted, however, to those pupils whose parents are in a position to help their children, and this is creating an inequality of access to literature and reference that is affecting learning for many pupils. The book club, which is run jointly by Year 6 pupils and the literacy co-ordinator, is a very successful venture and helps many children to gain access to good quality literature.

71. Most pupils read regularly to the teacher within the literacy hour but independent reading and individual reading with an adult are dependent on the organisation of each teacher, with 'I don't know when I read!' being remarked by one young pupil. Record keeping is similarly *ad hoc* and this does not enable the majority of teachers to develop reading skills appropriately for individual pupils or to drive standards forward effectively. Very few pupils take books home to share with parents and not all have home/school reading records. Parents are rightly concerned at the lack of involvement in their children's reading and would appreciate the opportunity to help build their children's confidence and to assist in the development of an interest in reading.

Writing

72. Pupils' attainment is similar to that of most seven-year-olds when they enter the school and by the end of the key stage pupils generally reach the level expected for eleven-year-olds. They adapt their writing for different purposes and are developing a good sense of audience. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 are beginning to use expressive, descriptive language in their writing very effectively. This was seen in a poetry lesson based on the work of Ted Hughes where pupils explored the poet's use of simile and metaphor and then attempted their own writing, modelling their style on that before them. Many pupils produced work of a high quality and their use of language for dramatic impact was notable. Pupils organise fiction and non-fiction writing for specific purposes, for example, stories, poems, accounts, diaries and biographies. Pupils in Year 6 write formal letters effectively, modelling their style on letters sent from the school to their own parents.

73. The literacy hour is having a significant impact on the development of pupils' grammatical knowledge and their understanding of language. Higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of how to write narrative, factual pieces and poetry. When they enter Year 6 a significant minority of pupils still find it difficult to produce a sustained piece of writing with the variety of language and the accuracy expected at this age. At the end of the year, there are still very few pupils who produce writing with clear sentence structure, good presentation, good punctuation and spelling. The school's introduction of setting and small group work in booster classes is having a marked impact on attainment by the end of the key stage. Pupils with special educational needs are very well catered for through different work within classes and through additional support for small groups. They make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans with skilled direct teaching designed specifically to meet their needs.

74. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, are making sound progress in their literacy lessons, which are generally well organised and provide proficient direct teaching. However, the school lacks a commonly agreed approach to developing pupils' literacy skills through the writing they produce for other subjects. The contribution that other

subjects make to literacy is being developed well by some teachers but not by others. Pupils apply literacy skills in history, geography and in religious education. There is, however, no whole-school structured approach to practising skills learnt in literacy lessons in many other activities.

75. During the inspection, very little unsatisfactory teaching was seen in English and where this was found it was largely because the lesson lacked challenge for higher attaining pupils. Occasionally teachers spend too long setting the task, which limits the time available for pupils to complete their work. In some lessons the layout of the room results in a disproportionate amount of the teacher's attention being given to the boys while the girls are often expected to get on with their work quietly for themselves.

76. The quality of teaching is sound overall and it is of a consistently high standard in Year 6. Where lessons are most effective, they are very well planned and well structured. The teachers explain the targets of the lesson, give pupils clear explanations of the concepts being taught and provide them with a good structure for them to model their work on. These lessons are characterised by very positive relationships between pupils and teachers who ensure that pupils are valued and that they know very well what is expected of them for both behaviour and attainment. The teachers' subject knowledge is good, and the teaching of basic skills is very clear and readily understood. Pupils are involved actively in their learning and have a clear understanding of the focus of the lessons. Very good lessons contain some excellent features, such as high expectations of work and behaviour, with the teacher exhibiting enthusiasm for literature and the power of language. In these lessons, the teachers inspire the pupils, carrying them along with their own energy, enthusiasm and enjoyment. This was seen in a poetry lesson, for example, where the teacher's evident love of the language and style of the poet inspired the pupils to write creatively themselves: 'Moonlight freezes like a still, rusty car, on the trees around like a cold iron bar'.

77. Teachers have worked hard to implement the Literacy Strategy and this frequently makes a significant contribution to raising standards. Generally, the teachers take good account of pupils' needs, ensuring that they are taught in appropriate sets where work is well planned for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. In too many lessons, however, the work planned does not take into account the varying needs and abilities of pupils within the set. It is not always demanding enough for the more able pupils and this lack of challenge throughout the school results in a situation where booster classes are being relied on in Year 6 to raise standards. These classes, where teaching is very specific and very well matched to clearly identified needs, are very effective within the time available but for many pupils there is insufficient time for them to gain the necessary skills to attain the standards of which they are capable. This heavy emphasis on literacy for many pupils in Year 6 is restricting their access to other areas of the curriculum, such as art and design and history and results in unequal provision for pupils in the booster sets. Teachers do not currently use information and communication technology sufficiently to support learning in English, but the school has clear plans to rectify this in the very near future.

78. Pupils' workbooks show that there are differences in expectations with regard to the quantity and quality of work produced. Although there are good examples of well annotated work that show good use of ongoing assessment, there are inconsistencies in the assessment and recording of pupils' progress. An example may be found in teachers' reading records. A few are very detailed, indicate all skills required and show progress very clearly. In other cases, reading records highlight books read, but there is no evidence of diagnostic comments and this is unsatisfactory. The marking of pupils' work varies from positive comments and helpful guidance on how to improve to a cursory acknowledgement. The overall curriculum for English provides adequate breadth and balance. Whilst the school has some appropriate procedures for assessment, the information is not collated in a form that makes it easy to see how pupils are progressing as they move through the school.

79. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly through helping pupils to consider and listen carefully to the views of others, and in developing a love and appreciation of literature and poetry in Year 6. The present co-ordinator is relatively new to her post and has not yet developed an overall awareness of what is happening in English teaching throughout the school. There are no procedures for rigorously monitoring the teachers' planning, the quality of teaching and samples of pupils' work, with the result that inconsistencies in marking and inappropriately targeted work are not yet identified and tackled.

80. It is clear that the school has made considerable efforts to improve the range of opportunities it provides for pupils to produce extended pieces of writing. The range of resources to support teaching and the quality of non-fiction materials are generally sound, but the range of fiction books in the classroom libraries is poor. Resources are well organised, allowing pupils easy access. But the unequal distribution of some resources in literacy lessons results in unequal access for groups of pupils who have to use poorly photocopied worksheets while their peers in another class have a plentiful supply of textbooks.

MATHEMATICS

81. The standards of attainment in mathematics as seen during the inspection are broadly average but overall performance is hindered by the relatively poor performance of higher attaining pupils. This is confirmed by results in national tests where, despite the upward trend of pupils reaching the standards expected, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels of attainment is low. In 2000 overall performance compared with national results and those of similar schools was therefore well below average. Trends over time show that boys perform slightly better than girls. In the past two years boys have had higher levels of attainment than girls have. Whilst there appears to be no easily identifiable explanation for this imbalance the school is beginning to become aware of the need to make further use of assessment to track such inconsistencies. However, the progress of pupils is now better than previously and is often good and particularly good in Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress because they are well supported in class lessons. Overall standards largely reflect those seen in the previous inspection.

82. A main focus of teaching during the period of the inspection was on numeracy but the sample of pupils' work generally indicates average levels of understanding of using and applying mathematics and of shape, space, measures and data handling. At the start of the key stage pupils in Year 3 show sound knowledge of simple table facts. They use practical methods to discover the equivalence of simple fractions while higher attainers consolidate this understanding in written calculations. In Year 4 pupils show good recall of table facts and begin to use patterns to predict the sequence of numbers. They identify division facts from corresponding tables and use this knowledge in calculations.

83. Pupils in Year 5 use the four operations of number and a secure knowledge of place value to solve problems related to real life in a satisfactory manner. Lower attaining pupils often provide answers but have difficulty in explaining their ideas and choosing the best strategy. Many pupils show good mental recall and use different approaches to solving problems. Higher attaining pupils successfully explain their mental strategies to the teacher or other pupils and check their answers for plausibility using approximations. In Year 6 pupils use a good range of strategies to make mental calculations so they are able to modify their approach. Many show a good understanding of fractions and decimals to perform calculations in money, length, time and capacity in the form of everyday problems. Higher attaining pupils use percentage amounts, are able to break down a problem into its constituent parts and a few realise that the process is as important as the final solution.

84. Since the time of the last inspection, the National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced and this is providing a good balance in lessons between mental activities, practical work and the

consolidation of understanding. Further improvements have been implemented by the recently appointed mathematics co-ordinator who has ensured that planning is consistent across the school. There are few opportunities for the monitoring of the teaching of numeracy and in this respect the co-ordinator's role is insufficiently developed.

85. Teaching is generally good. It is usually good in the higher ability sets and often very good in Year 6. It is occasionally unsatisfactory in Year 5 because of insufficiently high expectations of pupils; occasionally teachers do not make best use of the time available and there is not enough direct teaching of numeracy skills. The quality of learning and progress that the pupils make follows the same pattern. When teaching is satisfactory, lesson objectives are clearly explained and pupils know what they are trying to achieve. Sound class management ensures that the three phases of the lesson take place and pupils can work without distraction from those around them. When teaching is good the lesson moves at a swifter pace and pupils sustain their interest and concentration well. Careful planning ensures that tasks are well matched to ability, encouraging pupils to gain confidence and apply themselves. These features are present in approximately half the lessons observed. The best teaching is at the end of the key stage where subject knowledge is good and expectations are high. Pupils are challenged and make more progress. The behaviour of pupils is usually good.

86. The setting procedures used by the school are largely successful and contribute to the improving match of tasks to ability. The open nature of the accommodation makes communication difficult in some lessons although pupils seem remarkably resilient in coping with this distracting feature. Resources for mathematics are adequate and individual white-boards are used to good effect, providing teachers with instant feedback from pupils. While databases and spreadsheets are occasionally used, the planned use of information and communication technology is insufficient. The promotion of numeracy in other subject areas is also under-developed although there is evidence of calculations in science and measuring in design and technology. Mathematical vocabulary is quite well developed in most lessons when teachers display appropriate terminology alongside lesson objectives and promote the correct use of mathematical terms. The school analyses data from key stage and non-statutory tests and uses the results to set targets and to identify booster groups, but procedures are not sufficiently refined at present for this information to inform future planning effectively. However, the school has identified the need to address this in the imminent review of the impact of the National Numeracy Strategy.

SCIENCE

87. The attainment of pupils at the age of eleven is average and most pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. At the time of the last inspection in 1998 standards in science were judged to be in line with national averages, but in national tests that year pupils' performance was actually well below the national average. In 1999 there was a dramatic improvement in these results, when they rose to meet the national average. In the most recent tests, in summer 2000, an above average proportion of the pupils reached the expected level 4, but numbers reaching the higher levels were still relatively few. When comparisons are made with other schools, Short Heath's results in 2000 were below the national average for all schools and the average of schools deemed to have a similar intake of pupils.

88. Observations throughout the inspection indicate a similar picture in the current Year 6. It is likely that a high proportion of pupils will reach the Level 4 and fewer than average will reach the higher Level 5. Clearly increasing the number of pupils reaching this higher level is one aspect of performance the school is beginning to consider. When results for girls and boys are considered separately boys perform better in this subject than nationally, whereas girls do not. The inspection did not find any explanation for this, but such issues are something the school is starting to consider as part of its self-evaluation process.

89. Current Year 6 pupils have satisfactory understanding of the functions of the major organs of the body. They know that the heart is a pump and they have investigated the effect of exercise on pulse and heart rate. Some pupils have used their findings to draw graphs using computers. Pupils also learn about the function of plant parts and the process of photosynthesis. Pupils are aware of the solar system, the planets within it and how the movement of the earth around the sun results in the phenomena of day and night and the seasons. During the inspection Year 6 pupils considered whether sources of light were primary, producing their own light, such as candles, or secondary, reflecting light such as that from the moon. Pupils then went on to think about how light travels and how the human eye works. During the lessons observed several older pupils made good progress. This was noted in a Year 6 lesson where pupils learnt how sound is linked to vibrations. Using tuning forks, rubber bands and musical instruments pupils drew sketches to record their observations. Small groups worked well together collaboratively and sensibly helping each other to understand and share ideas.

90. Progress is satisfactory overall particularly in the development of knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas. During the inspection, Year 5 pupils investigated friction and often made good progress in conducting investigations. They tested shoes on a piece of sloping wood, comparing results to see which shoes had the best grip. In Year 4 pupils learnt about evaporation and condensation as part of their work on the earth's water cycle, whilst Year 3 pupils have been working on simple electrical circuits. Scrutiny of pupils' work throughout the school shows quite clearly a range of work that reflects the statutory requirements for science. The curriculum is well balanced and covers all of the major aspects and topics that it should. Where the quality of pupils' learning is good teachers make good use of formal and informal assessment to track the progress that pupils make and use this information to adjust lesson planning. However, whilst there are some good examples of this practice more could be done to ensure that the tracking of pupils' progress is more systematic.

91. Where progress could be better is in the development of practical skills in science. This was a criticism at the time of the last inspection and it is something the school has worked hard to improve. Recent monitoring shows that some progress has been made, but topic planning reveals that opportunities for pupils to measure changes in quantities such as time, weight, length and temperature and to record results and analyse them as part of experiments and investigations are missed. For instance in Year 6 when pupils look at plants they miss the opportunities to measure and weigh different seeds, record the time taken for germination and investigate conditions needed for germination to take place. In Year 4 pupils make 'tin can' telephones, but do not experiment with different types of container or thread as part of controlled tests.

92. Improvement in practical investigation in science is proving hard to achieve. Some lessons are heavily teacher directed with only limited opportunity for pupils to make choices in the lines of investigation to pursue or the choice of materials to use. Teachers do not always include precise, detailed references to practical skills in their short-term planning, as part of the learning objectives for lessons. At the end of each topic teachers rarely carry out an audit of the skills that have been used within a topic or make alterations to future teaching if the amount of practical work is low. The co-ordinator has identified the need to develop teachers' confidence and a culture of experimentation and investigation as an integral part of science.

93. Teaching and learning seen during the inspection was sound overall with almost half, being good. Teachers have clear ideas about what they want their pupils to know and they often share this with pupils at the start of lessons. Teachers introduce lessons well, give clear instructions and use good question and answer techniques to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers make lessons interesting and relevant to the pupils' lives. For instance pupils in Year 5 were absorbed in their work on how well shoes grip. Teachers demonstrate that they have the necessary skills to control and manage pupils sometimes in noisy activities to get the best out of practical work, and are aware of the need to employ these skills more frequently in delivering lessons with greater emphasis

on experimentation and investigation. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good. In the one lesson observed where teaching was unsatisfactory, the activity chosen did not challenge the pupils enough and they became restless.

94. Science has been a major focus for school development recently and this has made a notable difference to the quality of recent work. This has identified the crucial need for the development of a common system of short-term planning, which includes precise references to practical skills. The co-ordinator provides effective leadership; the resources are adequate, well ordered and accessible to teachers. The co-ordinator has helped staff to become more confident in their approach to science and has used monitoring to identify targets for improvement. However, the co-ordinator has only limited time and opportunities to oversee learning and to a lesser degree teaching in science throughout the school as part of a regular, ongoing system of monitoring and evaluation.

ART AND DESIGN

95. Standards in art and design are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of the key stage. As pupils move through the school they make satisfactory progress in the activities that they undertake. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make similar progress to that of other groups of pupils. Whilst attainment is average there are few examples of work of a higher than average standard, reflecting the quality of teaching which is satisfactory. These findings match those seen in the last full inspection of the school.

96. Pupils' work is rarely dated and this makes it difficult for the subject co-ordinator or any other observer to assess the frequency and quality of pupils' recent learning. At the end of Key Stage 2 work in pupils' sketchbooks shows only a limited amount of recent work. There are satisfactory pencil sketches of headdresses, including sideways and crossways views of a hat and designs for a kiss-o-gram hat and one for a clown. Pupils have produced reasonable sketches for a portrait of a friend; these show quite limited awareness of the positioning of facial features but satisfactory attempts at colour mixing. However, there is only limited evidence of an appropriate volume of work produced recently. This is in part due to the narrowing of the curriculum during one term of the year when approximately half of the Year 6 pupils do not take part in art activities due to the extension of booster class activities. Whilst it is a worthy aim to extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, the school is wisely considering the equality of access and opportunity issues created by such arrangements.

97. In Year 3 pupils have also produced sketches for a portrait and have produced preliminary drawings and practice lettering for a Christmas card, some of which are of a relatively low quality. They have produced sketches of a castle and a grid for an observational drawing in four quarters. Slightly better work in Year 4 shows a sketch of a design for a coil pot. Year 5 work on display shows an attractively displayed sample of paper and textile weaving using a half paper plate as a base, with samples displayed as the scales of a large fish. Classroom displays are sometimes disappointing and do little to fire the pupils' imagination or raise their self-esteem.

98. Pupils in Year 4 enjoy taking part in an activity where they transfer preliminary sketches onto a small polystyrene tile, which they then use as a printing block with thick printing inks. As pupils enjoy this activity, they work very carefully under the close supervision of a classroom support assistant, and they produce attractive work which illustrates the good progress that they have made within the lesson. Work on display also shows recent birds-eye type views of a road linked to work on journeys. The simplistic designs and bold use of colour illustrate satisfactory progress.

99. In Year 3 pupils investigate the use of coloured squares to produce simple outlines and make satisfactory sketches of an African dance mask prior to making a range of masks. Work in sketchbooks shows preliminary drawings of Christmas designs and of observational drawings and

work on colour mixing to make a colour wheel. Work on display also show 'Portraits of Kitty' using the work of Jacob Epstein and Lucien Freud as references. Some of the work linked to the New Art Gallery in Walsall is of a good standard.

100. Some of the work on display in the school is attractively displayed, as seen in the school entrance hall, and parents appreciate this. The studies of a Greek mask using drawing, painting and smudging techniques are pleasing as is the follow-up work making clay masks which were decorated to represent the bronzed effects of the original masks. However, some displays are untitled and this does little to raise pupils' self-esteem.

101. The planning of art and design activities is currently in an interim period. Previously the school has based planning upon appropriate subject guidance and has recently begun to link this to aspects of the new national guidelines. Whilst this is generally appropriate there appears some lack of clarity over what planning is current and how the subject is to develop. Art has not been a high priority for school development recently and staff miss many opportunities to raise the level of pupils skills through relatively uninspiring teaching.

102. The teaching of art and design is only just satisfactory. In the lessons observed teachers made clear their expectations of pupils but did not always make best use of time, demonstrate the techniques pupils were to undertake or really show pupils how to improve their skills. However, pupils responded well to the activities that they took part in and shared materials and ideas very happily. The sample of work in sketchbooks shows little evidence of a high level of interest or care in the work produced. Teaching does not appear to demand much of the pupils and teachers miss many opportunities to develop pupils' cultural awareness further. The marking of work does little to identify what the pupils need to do in order to improve their skills.

103. The analysis of work shows that pupils rarely experience a vibrant, exciting and challenging range of learning opportunities that cover every aspect of the art and design curriculum. In part this is linked to the lack of opportunity for the subject co-ordinator to undertake in-depth scrutiny of planning and learning or to observe the quality of teaching. Whilst the co-ordinator has initial training in the subject she has only limited opportunities to use her personal skills to influence the quality of teaching either through teaching model lessons or working alongside colleagues. Currently the school makes insufficient use of information and communication technology to support the development of design skills or art research.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. At the time of the last inspection progress in design and technology was judged to be unsatisfactory. Progress was inhibited by a lack of opportunity for pupils to design and make products as part of a regular programme and as a result pupils did not develop the skills associated with the subject sufficiently well. Provision for this subject has improved since the last inspection. There is now a planned programme of tasks and projects that ensure that pupils have regular access to appropriate learning experiences. However, this programme has not been in place long enough for the progress to lead to standards of attainment that are in line with national expectations; they are still below, but improving steadily.

105. The progress that pupils make including those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs is now satisfactory. Pupils in Year 3 explore structures by building frames of rolled paper, and make satisfactory progress in learning that triangles are a strong frame structure. They explore the frames further introducing struts and cross members. In Year 4 pupils' design and produce books that have parts that can slide and move. The quality of these books is good; they are finished attractively and have reliable mechanisms. In Year 5 pupils make biscuits as part of their project known as 'The Food Factory'. This is an interesting topic that develops

cooking skills at the same time as it raises pupils' awareness of hygienic practices in food production. An even broader perspective is gained as the food factory links with work in science on chemical changes and in history pupils look at the changes that have taken place in kitchen technology since the sixteenth century. This cross-curricular approach makes the topic both relevant and meaningful. Year 6 pupils benefit from links with the local secondary school when a specialist teacher works with pupils building bridges made of card. There is exploration of structures as pupils include pillars and arches to strengthen their designs. The results of this work have been used to produce an attractive display in the reception area of the school.

106. Whilst the quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory staff are aware that there are still some limitations to the design process. Where greater emphasis is given to the development of skills this leads to more detailed designs, better quality products and a raising of overall standards.

107. Teaching observed during the inspection was limited to Year 3 where pupils used designs drawn earlier in their books to decorate a prototype of a picture frame. This teaching was satisfactory. This bears out judgements made through the scrutiny of pupils' recent work. Teachers prepare these sessions thoroughly, linking the work with earlier lessons and producing an evaluation sheet that makes the activity all the more valuable. Pupils develop their cutting skills, experience working with a range of materials such as pasta, wool and drinking straws and become very absorbed in their work.

108. The curriculum for design and technology follows national guidelines and the current co-ordinator is responsible for the distribution of work throughout the school. There is no common system for short-term planning of lessons. It is at this level of planning that specific skills and techniques that pupils are expected to develop are not yet clearly identified as learning objectives. The school is aware of the need to develop skills systematically. The co-ordinator has little time to monitor work in design technology and to develop records of work that can be used as exemplars for future teaching and learning.

GEOGRAPHY

109. Standards in Year 6 are average, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection. This judgement is based on an analysis of pupils' work and discussions with some pupils. It was not possible to observe any geography lessons during the inspection due to the school's timetabling arrangements. The scrutiny of pupils' recent work indicates that the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Pupils, including those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language, are making satisfactory progress compared with their previous attainment.

110. The pupils have used their research skills satisfactorily, both in school and at home, to produce sound individual projects on distant places, such as the Canary Islands, Malta and North America. Many have used their literacy skills effectively in producing these by, for example, including appropriate content pages. The pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of some of the characteristic features of mountain environments, such as the Alps. They understand the potential of these areas for tourism, but they are also aware of how mass tourism can change these places, not always for the better. They use their literacy skills soundly to write letters for and against tourist development. The pupils have satisfactory knowledge of the changing nature of a river valley from source to mouth. They know how river flood plains in England have suffered badly from floods over the past six months and how settlements have been devastated. They understand that rivers can be used in a number of ways and that they can be polluted and damaged by man.

111. An analysis of pupils' work and of teachers' planning indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on developing knowledge of near and distant places, on environmental awareness, on local fieldwork and on developing pupils' mapping skills. Year 3 pupils, for example,

understand the need for map keys and they have used these satisfactorily in completing outline maps of the school and of Short Heath.

112. The co-ordinator manages the subject in a satisfactory manner. She has extended learning resources, which were criticised in the previous inspection. These are now broadly adequate. However, there is no monitoring of teaching or of the subject's performance, nor are there whole school procedures for assessing pupils' attainment. Planning is based exclusively on guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, with no adaptation to meet the particular needs of the school. The subject makes a sound contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Year 4 pupils contrast life in Short Heath with that in an Indian village, whilst, in a literacy lesson with a geographical theme, Year 5 pupils discussed the need to conserve the world's tropical rain forests.

HISTORY

113. Standards in Year 6 are average, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress compared with their previous attainment.

114. By Year 6 the pupils have average knowledge of aspects of life in Victorian Britain. They have used their literacy skills soundly to write about children and work in the nineteenth century and about the development of railways and the growth of seaside resorts. Pupils have researched information from logbooks and other sources about the school's history and about the old Short Heath Board School. They understand how Lane Head has changed since Victorian times. Younger pupils have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the invaders and settlers who have shaped Britain's history and about aspects of life in Roman Britain and during Viking times.

115. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, which maintains the findings of the previous inspection. In a Year 5 lesson, the teacher made very good use of an excellent range of resources to enhance the pupils' understanding of the differing lifestyles of the rich and poor in Tudor England. She matched work well to differing levels of ability. She valued pupils' contributions, thereby raising their self-esteem and confidence in speaking. In another Year 5 lesson, the teacher encouraged the pupils to 'think like young historians' in interpreting a 1593 inventory to learn about a typical Tudor house. This helped them to learn terms such as 'buttery', 'parlour' and 'milkhouse'. The teacher emphasised the importance of using primary evidence in finding out about the past. However, class control was insecure at times and the pace of the lesson suffered from frequent interruptions. In a Year 3 lesson, the teacher made sound use of pictures and a pupil's family holiday photographs to help the class realise the scale of the pyramids of Egypt. She made useful links with design and technology and mathematics, which helped the pupils in finding which nets made square pyramidal shapes. In another Year 3 lesson, there were insufficient opportunities for the pupils to contribute their ideas and design and technology skills were over-emphasised at the expense of historical ones and this limited learning.

116. The co-ordinator manages the subject in a satisfactory manner. Learning resources, which were criticised in the previous inspection, have been extended and are now adequate. Learning is enhanced by visiting theatre groups. Last year, Year 6 pupils participated in a 'Windows on the World' project and their work on local history was exhibited at the old Walsall Museum. This is one example of the way in which the subject is making a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Planning is based exclusively on guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, with no adaptation to meet the school's particular needs. There is no monitoring of teaching or of the subject's performance, nor are there whole school procedures for assessing pupils' attainment. These factors limit the co-ordinator's and the school's ability to move the subject forward and raise standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

117. Standards in information and communication technology are broadly in line with national expectations by the time pupils reach the end of the key stage. Since the time of the last inspection the school has improved the opportunities available to pupils through access to the Internet. The World Wide Web is used to research several areas of the curriculum and e-mail links with another school has been established. The school has its own website, which provides opportunities for pupils and parents to make contributions. There were few opportunities to observe the formal teaching of skills but when pupils used computers this was with a satisfactory level of confidence and with positive attitudes to their learning.

118. At the start of the key stage pupils develop their keyboard skills by experimenting with word-processing fonts and styles. They improve their literacy skills in a satisfactory manner by using adjectives and providing punctuation in simple word-processing exercises. They write their own stories and use the computer to produce lists of electrical items to support a science project. A graphics package is suitably used to develop drawing techniques. In Year 4 pupils access information to research into light and sound in science and to enhance their understanding of life in Roman times in history. Higher attaining pupils use drop down menus to select better words, which improve the quality of their writing. Pupils with special educational needs use the same software to improve their spelling. There is little evidence of data handling in the lower section of the school.

119. The Internet is employed in Year 5 to access websites for research into river development as part of their geography studies. In a similar way topics on the Tudor period and electricity are explored in history and science respectively and this enables the pupils to make satisfactory progress. As part of their studies in religious education, pupils' word-process their ideas on how they would like to be treated. The computer is used as an appropriate tool in mathematics work to produce block graphs and pie charts to summarise the findings of a data handling exercise on pet ownership. Lower attaining pupils gain support for their reading by using software which links to their reading scheme.

120. In Year 6 pupils satisfactorily extend their learning across the curriculum using more sophisticated software. They learn to use control software as part of a design technology project in which a sequence of instructions controls a set of lights. They also measure and record the reflection and absorption of light by different materials in a scientific data logging exercise. Pupils extend their literacy skills in descriptive writing and improve their mathematical understanding by handling and graphing data. There is little evidence of the use of controlling and modelling programs.

121. During the inspection no direct teaching of information and communication technology skills was seen but pupils are often active outside lesson times, working on projects and demonstrating sound techniques and confidence. The sample of pupils' work and discussions with staff indicate that, whilst teachers' subject knowledge is very variable, it is satisfactory overall. The subject co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and at least two other teachers have adapted software to match the needs of the pupils. Individual records show what tasks pupils have achieved and pupils keep their own work files on floppy disks. Boys and girls make equal progress as do pupils with special educational needs. By the end of the key stage their progress is satisfactory.

122. Discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work also indicates that the different strands of information and communication technology are taught and a wide range of software is used in support of other curriculum areas. The efficiency of this process is however unsatisfactory, as only two computers are available to each year group and pupils have insufficient opportunity to consolidate their skills. As the subject co-ordinator has only very limited opportunity to monitor the quality of planning, teaching and learning it has been difficult to identify and address such issues. In order to ease this problem some year groups have a parent helper who supervises pupils at the

computer under the direction of the class teachers, but this is not frequent. In the near future a networked computer suite, which will accommodate a whole class, is planned. The subject co-ordinator has clear and appropriate plans for the operation of the suite and the related training of teaching staff.

MUSIC

123. Standards are in line with national expectations by the end of the key stage and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. This represents maintenance of the standards seen in the previous inspection. Whilst several staff lack a high level of confidence and skills to teach music, effectively shared arrangements whereby one teacher takes parallel groups of the same age largely overcomes this issue. Parents and staff note with pride the good standard of singing of the school choir and the instrumental performances of the higher attaining pupils as seen in public performances. However, in the period of inspection these high standards were not apparent.

124. By the age of eleven, the quality of pupils' singing is average. Whilst most pupils enjoy singing in whole school assemblies and within class lessons, some singing is muted, and phrasing and tone are not well developed. Several pupils are at an early stage in their understanding of the language and structure of music. Whilst some pupils understand the meaning of words including pitch, tempo and dynamics not all pupils do, largely because few staff use this terminology in lessons. Pupils have been taught how to explore and express their ideas about the music that they hear. Pupils in Year 4 are able to make satisfactory responses to pulse and metre by patting their knees to the beat of a verse and clapping to the metre of a refrain with reasonable understanding of the different sections of the music.

125. During the inspection there was limited opportunity for pupils to compose and perform their own music and there is very little evidence of such activities in samples of pupils' recent work. There is no evidence of computer programmes being used to aid musical composition. The expectations of what the pupils can achieve are not very high. Pupils have not been taught in any depth the necessary composing skills that they need to develop their ideas within a musical structure; this limits the progress pupils make and is an area for much further development.

126. Pupils have opportunities to use a range of percussion instruments in several lessons. Pupils enjoy these activities and use the instruments sensibly and well. As part of their instrumental work pupils in Years 4 and 5 use untuned instruments including lollipop drums, triangles, and cymbals to play along to different sections of a taped piece of music. There are also a number of pupils who are learning a range of brass and stringed instruments outside of lessons and these pupils have the opportunity to widen their musical skills.

127. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils is satisfactory. However, staff readily admit there are inconsistencies in teachers' subject knowledge and understanding. Some staff are very reliant upon a commercial music scheme of work and whilst this is generally satisfactory this takes limited account of the pupils' own experiences. Where subject knowledge is better the pupils are helped by competent teaching to improve their skills. Although pupils have the opportunity to sing together there is not enough focus on improving the quality of the singing and teachers accept standards of singing that are not high. The effectiveness and influence of the music co-ordinator in the school is limited. This is because she has little time to work alongside other teachers and demonstrate good practice or to monitor the effect of the teaching and learning and the quality of planning. Staff would benefit from additional in-service training to lift their skills and confidence to a higher level. The co-ordinator is currently adapting the national guidelines for music to help teachers with their planning, to ensure that the skills pupils need to make progress are taught in more depth.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

128. Standards of attainment in physical education are average and broadly similar to those found at the last inspection. Since that time small adjustments to the balance of the curriculum elements have resulted in better continuity of progress as pupils move through the school. There has also been some improvement in the opportunities for pupils to engage in physical activities after school. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in the development of a range of skills due to the good subject knowledge of several teachers.

129. At the start of Key Stage 2 pupils show satisfactory control over their movements when responding to commands. They show good listening skills and vary the speed and height of movement by interpreting instructions given through different percussion sounds. In Year 4 most pupils can strike a ball with a bat with reasonable accuracy. While making good progress in developing the co-ordination of hand and eye through their batting skills, they are less successful at catching. The Year 5 pupils take full advantage of their opportunity to use the swimming baths by applying themselves to leg, arm and breathing exercises before practising the whole stroke. Pupils make good progress in swimming and many make very good progress where the teachers demand a good level of effort and give pupils clear instructions on how to improve their strokes and breathing techniques. The large majority of pupils attain the minimum 25 metre qualification and most easily exceed this. At the end of the key stage the older pupils work in small groups using an 'adventure in space' theme and the stimulus of appropriate music. They collaborate well to produce inventive dance movements and many offer sensible and constructive evaluations of their own performance and that of others.

130. Teaching is good especially at the end of the key stage. Sound planning and good class control are features of all teaching, enabling objectives to be explained and lessons to continue without interruption. Pupils show good levels of interest and always know what is expected of them. In Year 6 the pace of lessons is good and the higher expectations of teachers produce better physical effort and greater enjoyment. This is also true of swimming in Year 5. Good behaviour, respect for others and positive responses are features found in all lessons. Another positive characteristic of teaching is the attention given to health and safety issues and the need to dress appropriately when engaging in physical activity. Progress is good for both boys and girls and it is best towards the end of the key stage in dance and is very good in swimming.

131. Management of the physical education curriculum is satisfactory and the school uses an appropriate scheme of work, which is adapted to suit its own needs. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The subject co-ordinator provides help to colleagues after school but his role is not sufficiently developed to monitor teaching and to improve standards. Resources are adequate but the general-purpose hall is rather small especially for older pupils. Lessons that take place in the hall are sometimes over-long particularly for younger pupils. Lesson objectives could be met in a shorter time without loss of quality, if taken at a faster pace. The large playing field is an asset to the school but waterlogging limits its use in winter. Parents have raised this issue and those concerning the provision of extra-curricular activities in recent years. Both issues have been addressed to some extent by the availability of football training, touch rugby and basketball at after school clubs. Older pupils also benefit from a residential weekend and access to the sports facilities at the local comprehensive school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

132. Standards in Year 6 are average and meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This judgement reflects the findings of the previous inspection. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, are making satisfactory progress.

133. The pupils know about the early life of Jesus and about his later work as a teacher and healer. They understand the significance of Holy Week and Easter in the Christian calendar. They are familiar with some Old Testament stories, such as Moses and the Ten Commandments, and have used their literacy skills soundly to record these. The pupils know about aspects of Sikhism, Islam and Judaism. For example, they understand how important the sharing of food is for Sikhs and how significant Chanukah and the Seder meal are for Jews. They know about Ramadan and the reasons why Muslims believe that fasting is important. Pupils link this idea with the Christian time of Lent and they think of things, which they might consider giving up. The pupils understand how different places of worship, such as churches, gurdwaras and mosques, are special to peoples of different faiths. They have used their literacy skills effectively to write satisfactory accounts of visits to the local church and gurdwara. They know how pilgrimages are an important part of some of these faiths.

134. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, which maintains the findings of the previous inspection. In a Year 3 lesson, the teacher used questioning well to help the pupils understand the idea of Jesus' parables as stories with a meaning. Questions such as, 'What moral can we learn from this story?' helped the pupils in their understanding of stories such as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. The teacher's lively reading of the story of Jesus' temptation in the Wilderness stimulated the pupils' interest. She made useful links with design and technology when the pupils made effective 'spinners' to illustrate the temptations of Jesus. In another lesson, however, the pupils were given insufficient time to reflect on ideas and to make their own contributions.

135. The co-ordinator has made a satisfactory start in managing the subject. She has extended the range of learning resources, which was criticised in the previous inspection. These are now adequate. Learning is enhanced by worthwhile visits to the local church and gurdwara. There is no monitoring or evaluation of teaching or of the subject's performance, nor are there any whole school procedures for planning or for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the teachers strive to instil in the pupils' respect for diverse faiths and cultures, particularly, at this time of the year, for the social and cultural values of Easter. Pupils in Year 5 discussed 'The Golden Rule' and the consequences of failing to live up to it.