

INSPECTION REPORT

STIRCHLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103264

Headteacher: Mrs. K. Basterfield

Reporting inspector: Mr. I. Pratt
13626

Dates of inspection: 11 - 15 September 2000

Inspection number: 225012

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. W. Evans
Date of previous inspection:	23 - 26 September 1996

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Ian Pratt OIN 13626	Registered inspector	Science Physical education Provision for pupils with special educational needs Provision for pupils with English as an additional language Equality of opportunity	The school's results and pupils' achievements The quality of teaching and learning Leadership and management What should the school do to improve further?
Joanna Illingworth OIN 13395	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Care, support and guidance of pupils Partnership with parents and carers
Tom Simpson OIN 10428	Team inspector	English Religious education Geography History Provision for children under the age of five	The curricular opportunities offered to pupils
Jackie Johnson OIN 24891	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art Design and technology Music	Assessment Accommodation, staffing and resources for learning

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stirchley Community School is a mixed school of broadly average size, serving 209 pupils aged between three and eleven years of age. Fifty six per cent of pupils are boys and 44 percent girls. The school has a much higher percentage of pupils who leave or join the school than the average for the local education authority; for example, 44 per cent of the Year 6 pupils taking the National Curriculum tests in 2000 did not start their education at the school. Children enter the Nursery class in the September of the academic year in which they will be four, but only around 50 per cent move into the reception class the following year, the remainder moving to other schools in the area. At the time of the inspection, 59 pupils were under the age of five. Standards on entry to the school are below those expected for children of this age.

The school serves an urban area three miles south-west of the centre of Birmingham. Many of the pupils are from disadvantaged homes, and eligibility for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs has doubled since the last inspection. Twenty-two per cent of pupils have special educational, mainly moderate learning difficulties, including two pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need; broadly in line with the national average. A large proportion of pupils who join the school after the reception year, arrive with special educational needs. A particular feature of the school is the widely differing nature of pupils from one year group to another. In the current Year 6, around 40 per cent of pupils have special educational needs whereas Year 2 has only eight per cent.

Pupils at the school come from diverse ethnic backgrounds; around 71 per cent are white and 29 per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Fifteen per cent of pupils come from homes where English is an additional language, and nine per cent are at the early stages of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Stirchley is an effective school. It provides a good, all-round education for its pupils and serves its community well. In relation to their attainments on entry to the school, the pupils achieve satisfactory standards by the end of Key Stage 2, even though they attain generally below the national averages. The headteacher provides very effective leadership and management for the school, which is effective in achieving the targets it sets itself. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests for eleven year olds in science were much higher than in the previous year, with 95 per cent reaching Level 4 or above.
- The quality of teaching is good overall, and there are examples of very good teaching at each key stage.
- The school is led and managed very well by the headteacher, governors and other staff with management responsibilities.
- Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes is very good.
- The school is rapidly improving its standards and the quality of education it provides.
- Moral and social development is promoted very well, and all adults provide very good role models for the pupils to emulate.
- The school provides a very caring and supportive environment that fosters learning well.

What could be improved

- The attainments of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are still generally below the national average, and standards at the end of Key Stage 1 vary greatly from year to year.
- The pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of language are weak, and this adversely affects their standards in writing, speaking and listening.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory, despite improving over the last year.
- The levels of pupils' independence and maturity are unsatisfactory, and this restricts the pace at which they learn.

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

This is a school with many significant strengths that outweigh its weaknesses.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved very well since its last inspection in September 1996. The results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved steadily, at a rate above the national trend. The quality of teaching is good overall and the proportion of very good or better teaching has improved markedly. Assessment procedures have improved very well, and assessment information is effectively analysed to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. Curriculum planning is now good throughout the school, and is used effectively by teachers to ensure that the pupils learn in a continuous and progressive way. Leadership and management, reported as weak in the last inspection report, are now very good. Since the appointment of the current headteacher, three years ago, the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team have become crystal clear, as has the educational direction of the school, and this has contributed strongly to the rapid improvements within the school. The governing body are now fully involved in the leadership and management of the school, including the monitoring and evaluation of its work. Attendance rates have improved, although they are still unsatisfactory. The provision for the pupils' social and moral development is now strong. The school has not established an improving trend in its National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 1, and this remains a significant weakness.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	E	C	E	D
mathematics	E	D	D	C
science	E*	D	E	E

Key

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

By the age of five, the children's attainments are below the national expectations in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development. They achieve appropriate standards in personal, social, emotional, physical and creative development.

The 1999 National Curriculum assessments for seven year olds show that standards in reading and mathematics are below the national average and below average for similar schools. Results in writing are below both the national and similar schools averages. Standards are rising at a rate similar to the national trend, but vary greatly from one year to another, reflecting the widely differing attainment levels and learning difficulties of the pupils within each year group. The results of the 2000 tests show a significant dip in standards of reading and writing, although mathematics standards rose. This particular group of pupils contained a very high proportion with special educational needs and language difficulties.

Results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds indicate that standards are well below the national average in English and science, and below average in mathematics. Compared with similar schools, the results are average in mathematics, below average in English and well below average in science. Since the last inspection, standards in all three subjects have risen at a rate faster than the national trend, and whilst standards are below the national picture, the school is closing the gap. The results of the 2000 tests show continued steady improvements in English and mathematics, and a rapid rise in standards in science. Boys and girls attain equally well in the tests. The school's targets for improvement in English and mathematics are realistic, and are based on the careful monitoring of the pupils academic performance.

Work seen during the inspection shows that at the end of both key stages, standards are below those expected in English, mathematics and science. However, the standards attained by pupils currently in Year 2 are higher than those attained last year, whilst at the same time, the standards in Year 6 are lower than last year. Fluctuations in standards reflect the proportions of pupils with special educational needs and language difficulties in each year group, rather than differences in the quality of provision made for them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils like school and a large majority are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory; a large majority of pupils behave well in class and around the school,
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory personal development, although pupils lack independence and maturity in their approach to their work. Relationships between pupils and with adults in the school are generally good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory attendance, although the rate of attendance has improved well during the last year. Punctuality is mainly satisfactory.

The pupils' positive attitudes to the school create a pleasant atmosphere and purposeful climate for learning. The school is an orderly community, although a few pupils in Key Stage 2, mainly boys, lack self control and at times this slows their rate of learning and that of others. Pupils willingly accept responsibilities given to them, but they lack initiative and independence in their approach to learning, and this slows their progress. Attendance, whilst improving, is still unsatisfactory, and inhibits the learning of the pupils who are absent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good overall and the proportion of very good or better teaching has improved well since the last inspection. During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons, good or better in 66 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 19 per cent. The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage, the Nursery and Reception classes, is particularly strong, with all teaching being of good or better quality. There is some very good teaching at all key stages, and examples of excellent teaching at the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. Teaching was unsatisfactory in seven per cent of lessons. In the Foundation Stage, the teachers have a very secure understanding of the curriculum and of how young children learn. They have high expectations and provide a rich and stimulating environment for learning. At Key Stages 1 and 2, the quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily across the subjects of the curriculum, although insufficient emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' understanding and use of language. Lessons are planned carefully; teachers are clear about what they intend the pupils to learn, and successfully motivate them to learn what is intended. In literacy and numeracy, teachers consistently match work to meet the varying learning needs of pupils within the class, but this is inconsistent in other subjects, resulting in insufficient challenge for middle and high attaining pupils in some lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall; promotes the pupils' learning well. Very good provision is made for children at the Foundation Stage.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory; good quality support from teachers and classroom assistants, but support is not always available when it is needed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory; the quality of support is good, but not enough support is available.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall; very good provision for social and moral development, and good provision for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good care, guidance and support provided.

The school provides the pupils with good opportunities for learning. Curriculum planning has improved greatly since the last inspection, and is now good. Opportunities for personal, social and health education are good, and the good involvement of the community adds breadth to the curriculum. There are relatively few extra-curricular activities, but those that are provided enhance and extend the pupils' learning well. Opportunities for social and moral development are promoted very well through the consistent application of the behaviour policy and the very good role models provided by the adults in the school. Procedures for assessing the pupils' attainments and monitoring their progress have developed very well since the last inspection, and targets for development are set for each pupil. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs have developed well, but still not all pupils are identified quickly enough. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are effective, although the rate of attendance is still below average. The school has effective links with the parents and provides them with good information about the school, although the written reports on the pupils' progress are rather bland.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; the headteacher provides very effective all round leadership and management for the school, and is ably supported by senior managers and co-ordinators.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good; the governors support the school well, and are fully involved in planning, monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is good, enabling it to identify accurately its strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Good; the school allocates resources effectively and efficiently, ensuring that its priorities are suitably supported with funds.

The headteacher gives the school very clear educational direction, focused on improving standards and the quality of education. The governors are very supportive of the school, and their role in its management is good. The work of the school is monitored rigorously, and action is taken to improve if required. Financial planning and monitoring are good, and the very effective work of the school secretary ensures that goods are purchased at highly competitive rates. All of the non-teaching staff, make a very valuable contribution to the day-to-day running of the school and the maintenance of its warm, friendly atmosphere. The caretaker, supported by the cleaning staff, works tirelessly to provide the best possible environment for learning. The school has a satisfactory supply of teachers, support staff and resources for learning. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, but has some good features such as the computer suite and art area. Much has been accomplished over the last three years to improve the condition of the building and the facilities it offers.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The pupils like the school and progress well.• The good quality of the teaching.• The expectations of pupils to work hard.• The information received about how their child is getting on.• The improvements in the accommodation.• The school can be approached if parents have questions or problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The behaviour of the pupils.• The leadership and management of the school.• The amount of extra-curricular activities provided.• The amount of homework provided.

The inspection findings strongly agree with parents views, that teaching is good, pupils are expected to work hard, the school is approachable and that accommodation has been improved well. Inspectors also agree that the range of extra-curricular activities is relatively narrow. However, the inspection findings disagree with parents on a number of issues. The behaviour of the pupils is satisfactory overall, with only a few pupils, mainly boys, behaving in an unsatisfactory manner. The inspection team also judges that the quality of leadership and management of the school is very good, and has been responsible for the wide-ranging and rapid improvements in many aspects of the school's work. The amount of homework given is satisfactory at present, although the school accepts that the implementation of the new policy may well have been inconsistent last term.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Children enter the nursery class at the age of three with levels of skill, knowledge and understanding that are below the expectations for children of this age, and with particularly poorly developed communication, language, literacy, mathematical and social skills. Their progress in the nursery is good, because of the very effective teaching and curriculum that is provided for them, although standards remain below expectations at the end of their nursery year. Around 50 per cent of children, frequently the high attainers, transfer to other schools at the end of their nursery year. Therefore, children that enter the reception class tend to be those with low prior attainment, with learning difficulties or with English as an additional language. The children also make good progress in the reception class because of the quality of the teaching and provision made for them. By the age of five, most of the children achieve the nationally expected early learning goals for personal, social, emotional, physical and creative development, although attainments remain below or well the expected standards in communication, literacy, language and mathematical development.

2. The 1999 National Curriculum assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show standards in reading and mathematics to be well below the national average and below average for similar schools. The writing results are below both the national and similar schools averages. Whilst there is an overall trend of rising standards, at a rate similar to the national trend, standards vary greatly from one year to another. This is because there are widely differing proportions of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language within each year group, and this affects the overall standards attained. This point is clearly illustrated by the school's results in the Key Stage 1 tests in 2000, which show a significant dip in standards of reading and writing, although mathematics standards rose. This particular group of pupils contained a very high proportion with special educational needs and language difficulties.

3. The work seen during the inspection confirms that at the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils attain standards that are below the expectations for their age in English, mathematics and science. There is substantial evidence, however, that the standards attained by pupils in the current Year 2 are higher than those attained last year, because this group of pupils has relatively few with special educational needs or English as an additional language. The pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of language across all aspects of the curriculum remains a significant weakness in their development, and has an adverse affect on the standards that they achieve. In writing and when speaking, they find difficulty in expressing their thoughts clearly, using a rich and varied vocabulary. Pupils broadly meet the standards expected for their age in art, design and technology, geography, history, music, religious education and physical education.

4. Results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, show that standards are well below the national average in English and science, and below average in mathematics. Compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the results are average in mathematics, below average in English and well below average in science. If the results of these pupils are compared with the standards that they reached when they were seven years old, they have attained average standards in English and mathematics, but below average standards in science. Since the last inspection, standards in all three subjects have risen at a rate faster than the national trend, and whilst standards are below the national average, the school is closing the gap. The results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests show continued steady improvements in English and mathematics, and a rapid rise in standards in science. Boys and girls attain equally well in the tests.

5. The school's targets for improvement in English and mathematics over the next two years are suitably challenging and are realistic, being based on the careful monitoring of the pupils' academic performance.

6. Work seen during the inspection indicates that at the end of Key Stage 2, standards are below those expected for pupils of this age in English, mathematics and science. The standards attained by the pupils in the current Year 6 are lower than those attained by Year 6 pupils last year, but this variation reflects the proportions of pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language in these year groups, rather than differences in the quality of provision made for them. The low levels of language development continue at this key stage, and persist in hindering the pupils' attainments. The pupils attain standards that are broadly typical for their age in art, design and technology, geography, history, music, religious education and physical education.

7. The attainments of pupils at the end of both key stages are below the expectations for their age in information and communications technology, because the school has only recently installed sufficient equipment to enable them to develop standards in all aspects of the curriculum.

8. Making judgements about the achievements of pupils over time, and in relation to their previous learning is highly problematical in this school, because of the high proportion of pupils who leave and join the school during each school year. For example, 44 per cent of pupils taking the Key Stage 2 tests last year did not start in Stirchley School. There is also a distinct trend of mainly high attainers leaving Stirchley to attend other schools, and mainly low attainers, and those with special educational needs or English as an additional language joining the school, having started their education elsewhere. Overall, the pupils achieve satisfactorily, in response to the good teaching they receive and their generally positive attitudes to learning. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, because of the good quality support they receive from teachers, classroom assistants and volunteers. At both key stages, high attainers are not consistently given sufficient challenge to enable them to attain the standards of which they are capable across all subjects of the curriculum. Boys and girls attain broadly similar standards.

9. Standards in literacy and numeracy are below those expected, but are improving steadily at the end of Key Stage 2 due to the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies, which have brought about improved curriculum planning and teaching. Literacy standards are promoted well across the subjects of the curriculum. Writing is used effectively in many subjects. In science, for example, pupils accurately record their observations and write up their experiments and investigations. Reading skills develop soundly within literacy lessons, and through the frequent opportunities given to pupils in other subjects. Skills in independent research, such as using books, the Internet and CD-ROMs, are not developed well because pupils are given too few opportunities. Numeracy skills are promoted effectively in science, design and technology and geography, through the use of measuring, recording data in tables and the production of graphs. The mental mathematics sessions within numeracy lessons are promoting the quick recall of number facts, and are giving the pupils increased confidence in manipulating numbers in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The last inspection report judged that pupils had good attitudes to learning, were interested in their work, and were polite and friendly. The school was described as an orderly community in which standards of behaviour and the quality of relationships were good. The findings of the current inspection are that attitudes, values and personal development are satisfactory overall. Most of the positive features previously reported have been successfully maintained. Pupils continue to have good attitudes to learning and in general behave satisfactorily. The inspection does not support the views of some parents, that behaviour is generally unsatisfactory at Key Stage 2. It does, however, support the view that there are a few difficult pupils in each class.

11. Pupils are generally well motivated and like coming to school. In lessons, the majority want to learn and are keen to please their teachers. They are attentive and sustain their concentration well, but prefer active involvement in tasks, rather than listening to their teachers or to one another. They enjoy answering questions, but often lack confidence when asked to read aloud or talk about their work. Where teaching is stimulating, pupils settle down quickly and become absorbed in their tasks, but when the pace of lessons is slow, they lose their enthusiasm and interest. A small minority of pupils, mostly boys in the older year groups, display unsatisfactory attitudes to learning. They become inattentive and noisy, and distract the rest of the class. They do not work well when asked to work independently, needing close supervision to keep them on task. The majority of pupils are able to work successfully on individual and group activities in lessons, but do not have a well developed capacity for personal study or for organising themselves. On occasions, they forget to take reading books home or fail to bring the right equipment to school.

12. Standards of behaviour are satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2, and are very good in the nursery and reception classes. Pupils are polite and friendly to visitors, and show respect for property, handling equipment responsibly in lessons. In general they move around the site in an orderly manner, and are well behaved in the playground and classrooms during the lunch hour. A few instances of boisterous and silly behaviour were observed during the inspection, but bullying and aggression are not features of life in school. Most pupils respect the code of conduct and respond positively to the system of rewards. Younger children, in particular, value the approval of members of staff. Behaviour in lessons is usually good, and is closely related to the quality of teaching. Pupils behave well in lessons that have good pace and challenge, but where the pace is slow and tasks are undemanding, teachers have to work hard to manage behaviour, at times with limited effect.

There is a hardcore of difficult pupils in most of the year groups in Key Stage 2. Nevertheless, really poor behaviour is rare, as recent low rates of exclusion show. In the last year, one pupil was excluded for a fixed period. This represents a significant improvement on the rate exclusion since the inspection.

13. The quality of relationships within the school is good. Pupils co-operate well with one another in lessons, and mainly show respect for one another's feelings, values and beliefs. For example, they are aware that some classmates have difficulties in speaking English, and treat them with patience and sensitivity. There is no evidence of sexism, racism or of hostility between different year groups. Relationships with adults in the school are also good. Pupils have confidence in members of staff. They find them approachable, and are willing to turn to them when they need help and advice. A few children show little concern for the effect of their actions on other people, as for example when they are noisy and inattentive in lessons, and do not care about preventing the rest of the class from learning.

14. Overall, the pupils make satisfactory progress in their personal development, although weaknesses remain in their willingness to take responsibility for their own learning and work independently. Pupils of all ages respond positively to opportunities to exercise responsibility in the day-to-day running of the school. For example, they are keen to be monitors and to carry out errands for members of staff, and Year 6 pupils take on more demanding responsibilities, such as the role of "buddy" to younger children in the school. However, a minority remain relatively immature, indulging in attention seeking behaviour in class and struggling to be independent learners.

15. The pupils' attendance is still significantly below the national average, and this adversely affects the rate of learning of the pupils involved. Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection, now reaches 90 per cent and the incidence of unauthorised absence has declined sharply. Punctuality is satisfactory. Pupils arrive on time for school in the mornings and quickly get ready for lessons, which begin and end on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is good overall, and the proportion of very good or better teaching has improved well since the last inspection. During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons, good or better in 66 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 19 per cent. There is some very good teaching at all key stages, and examples of excellent teaching at the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. Teaching was unsatisfactory in seven per cent of lessons. The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is particularly strong, with all teaching being of good or better quality. Teaching in Year 5 is also of consistently high quality.

17. With such a large proportion of good or better teaching, it is surprising that levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are not higher. This is because despite good teaching, there are a number of factors that contribute to the below average levels of attainment. These are, the significant language difficulties of a large proportion of the pupils, the high rate of turnover of pupils each year, and a trend of high attainers leaving the school and lower attainers joining.

18. In the Foundation Stage, the teachers have a very secure understanding of the curriculum and of how young children learn. The infectious enthusiasm of the teachers generates a highly positive atmosphere for learning. Teachers have high expectations, and provide a rich and stimulating environment in which every opportunity is taken to develop the children's understanding of language. For example, in the reception class, when the teacher was organising the children, she asked individuals to go and look in different parts of the classroom, on different colour tables, and describe what they found. Planning and assessment are effective. The teachers know exactly what they expect the children to learn or experience within each of the activities that they provide, and the adult interventions in these activities are very effective in extending the children's learning. Through observation and questioning, the teachers constantly assess what the children know, understand and can do, and this information is used effectively to plan what they should learn next.

19. The quality of teaching at Key Stages 1 and 2 is good. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting and returning the questionnaire expressed their general satisfaction with the quality of teaching, but were critical of homework and behaviour management in Key Stage 2 classes. The inspection findings support their positive views, but find that the management of behaviour and homework at Key Stage 2 are satisfactory overall. Teachers settle their classes quickly and have clear and suitably high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. The behaviour of the pupils is best when teachers are explicit about how they expect them to behave, when teachers quickly capture the pupils' interest, and when challenging activities are set for pupils of all abilities. In a large majority of

lessons, the good management and organisation of the pupils results in little time being lost, because most pupils concentrate well and maintain interest in their work. Occasionally, lessons are slow to start, pupils are not involved quickly enough, and the tasks set either over challenge low attainers or under challenge high attainers. In these lessons the behaviour of pupils, and consequently their learning, suffers.

20. During the inspection, homework was used effectively to extend the learning of the pupils, but the school accepts that the implementation of the new homework policy lacked consistency in the previous term.

21. Teachers use effective methods and strategies in lessons. For example, many numeracy lessons start with a lively mental mathematics session, which engages all pupils in answering questions, memorising facts and practising their numeracy skills. This regular and interesting work improves their confidence in handling number well. Other effective methods used across the curriculum are, clear explanations, timely demonstrations, and good use of the board to organise ideas. Teachers use whole class teaching very effectively in most subjects. However, the use of short spells of small group tuition, to teach a particular point whilst the rest of the class is engaged in independent work, is mainly confined to literacy and numeracy lessons, and is not used as fully as it might be in other subjects, for example, in science.

22. The quality of the teachers' planning is consistently good. Teachers are clear about what they expect the pupils to learn, and invariably share this information with the pupils. This stimulates the pupils' interest, enables them to understand what they are trying to achieve and motivates them to learn what is intended. In the best lessons, teachers refer back to their intended learning objectives both during and at the end of the lesson, enabling the pupils to understand how much they have learned, and what they still need to learn.

23. Assessment information is used effectively to plan what the pupils will learn next in literacy and numeracy lessons. In other subjects the use of assessment information is very inconsistent. Whilst teachers frequently identify in their planning how they will meet the needs of low attaining pupils, they are not sufficiently clear about how the needs of middle and high attaining pupils will be met, and as a result, these pupils are not consistently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. This was clearly illustrated in a Year 2 science lesson, where, after a lively and interesting start to the lesson, all pupils were set the same task, which provided too little challenge to middle and high attaining pupils. These pupils did not work at a sufficiently high rate, some became bored and little was achieved during this part of the lesson. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' recorded work is satisfactory. Work is regularly marked, but the quality and frequency of constructive comments to aid pupils' progress is unduly variable.

24. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach, and this, linked with their enthusiasm, results in interesting and lively lessons, in which pupils are eager to learn, and make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skill.

25. The quality of teaching is good overall in English, mathematics, art, history and information technology. Teaching is satisfactory overall in science, music and physical education. Little teaching was seen in design and technology therefore no overall judgement can be made, however, the lessons observed were of at least good quality.

26. The teaching of literacy is effective. The school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy successfully, and the well-planned lessons are starting to improve standards. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily across the subjects of the curriculum, although insufficient emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' understanding and use of language, and this restricts their learning. The teaching of numeracy is also effective. The school has implemented all parts of the National Numeracy Strategy, and the quick-fire questions and other mental mathematics tasks are particularly effective in helping to give the pupils more confidence with numbers.

27. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language receive good quality support from classroom assistants, and volunteers are deployed effectively to help the pupils in their learning.

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

28. The school provides a broad and stimulating curriculum, which includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. A good range of practical activities is provided in the Foundation Stage covering all the required areas of learning, and is largely based on providing the children with first hand experience. Provision at this stage in the school is a particular strength. There is also a sound programme of personal, social and health education that is delivered through topics, class discussion sessions and several subjects of the curriculum. Sex education and drugs education are appropriately taught within the science programme of work. The school successfully draws on the expertise of several members of the community such as local clergy, and the school nurse supports the teaching of sex education. All statutory requirements in respect of the curriculum are fully met, and the school ensures that all pupils have equal access to the learning opportunities provided.

29. An appropriate amount of time is allocated to literacy and numeracy. The National Literacy and Numeracy strategies are fully in place, and provision is further enhanced by extra lessons focusing on reading and extended writing. Both literacy and numeracy are also promoted across the curriculum, with contributions, for example, from history, religious education and science. The framework for curriculum planning is good. This is a marked improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Much long term planning is founded on a one-year topic cycle and is suitably guided by nationally produced curriculum materials. Medium and short term planning are appropriately detailed, and ensures that skills and knowledge develop progressively as pupils proceed through the school. Regular curriculum specialty weeks are held. So far these have included science and mathematics weeks, while a literacy week is planned for later this term.

30. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils with English as an additional language. Teachers frequently identify how they will support these pupils in their planning, and in literacy and numeracy in particular, match work carefully to meet their needs. Teaching assistants and volunteers are deployed effectively to support pupils, and through their sensitive and attentive work, learning progresses at a satisfactory rate. Good quality individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs provide the focus for much of the support of these pupils, and this ensures that their needs are met and reviewed in a systematic way.

31. The community contributes very positively towards pupils' learning, again an improvement on the findings of the previous report. There are strong links with several local business organisations. Pupils have taken part in a fire safety poster competition, organised by the Fire Brigade, and another relating to attendance, sponsored by the Birmingham Careers and Education Business Partnership. Pupils in Year 6 regularly enter the Rover Challenge. This entails designing a model car using a limited budget and a restricted range of materials. Finished designs are presented to members of the company's staff. The school also recently received a grant from another car company to develop part of its grounds. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the induction of pupils into their new secondary schools, and there are examples of curriculum support from these schools. Good relationships also exist with Bournville College, which runs a number of courses for parents, support staff and pupils at the school.

32. Currently there are only a small number of extra curricular activities provided, although the quality of these learning opportunities in games, recorders and French, is good. Parents at the meeting and returning the questionnaire expressed concern about the small number of extra-curricular activities. The inspection team agreed with this concern, but recognised that the school also enriches the curriculum in other ways, through external links, for example, and through outside visits and visitors to the school. A number of additional informal activities are also available to pupils during lunch breaks, for example using computers to play games.

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

33. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. It is supported through acts of collective worship, class discussion times and religious education lessons. In assemblies, for example, pupils are given the opportunity to pray and to reflect on their relationship with their God. During religious education lessons, they are enabled to explore the meaning of prayer and of miracles. The wide range of religions and beliefs of pupils in the school are well celebrated. Arrangements for the pupils' moral and social development are very good, and are strengths of the school. There is a wide range of strategies in place for managing the pupils' behaviour, and the consistent implementation of these strategies provides pupils with clear indications of what is right and wrong. Strategies, including appropriate rewards and sanctions, are universally applied in an atmosphere of care and respect. All staff provide a very good example for pupils to emulate. A very good range

of opportunities exists for pupils to exercise responsibility both within class and around the school. Year 6 pupils are required to apply for their positions in writing to their class teacher or to the head. They are also encouraged to act as 'buddies' to new members of the school community. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is good. It is enhanced through music, literature and art. The school is enriched by displays of work by major artists, although most of these are part of the European tradition. The provision of music, however, recognises the contribution of composers from other parts of the world. Books are fully representative of the multi-cultural dimension of modern Britain. The school's overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant improvement on the findings of the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The school has maintained the high standards of pastoral care that were identified in the previous inspection report. It has good procedures for promoting the health, safety and welfare of pupils, and establishing discipline. Members of staff know pupils well, monitor their progress, and give them effective educational and personal support.

35. The school provides a safe and secure environment for its pupils. Arrangements for child protection are good. All members of staff are suitably trained and properly briefed on the school's procedures. They know that they must report any concerns immediately to the headteacher. Health and safety procedures meet legal requirements. There is good provision for first aid, and close co-operation with the school nurse. There are effective arrangements for fire drills and checks of equipment. All accidents are properly recorded. The accident book shows that most incidents are minor, and mainly involve pupils who have fallen down or bumped into each other at playtimes. The school has recently carried out a whole school risk analysis. The only areas of concern are the playground, which is not well suited to the needs of the youngest pupils, and access to the buildings for pupils who arrive late. Both issues are being addressed by the school.

36. The quality of pastoral care is good. Arrangements for introducing children to the nursery class are very successful. As a result, newcomers settle in quickly, are happy and make good progress. Pupils continue to get good support and guidance throughout their time in the school. Much of the provision is informal and is dependent on good personal relationships. It is none the less effective. Members of staff know all their charges well, and closely monitor their personal development and general progress. They are able to provide guidance which meets individual needs, as is the case in lessons where teachers help pupils who are having problems with their work, and give due praise to those who are doing well. The school also has good formal systems for educational and personal support. Pupils receive encouragement and recognition of their achievements via formal rewards, such as merit certificates and presentations in celebration assemblies. Their academic progress is also supported by target setting, which informs them of their strengths and weaknesses, and advises on action for improvement.

37. Procedures for promoting good attendance are thorough and fully comply with legal requirements. They are effective, having successfully raised the rate of attendance by two per cent during the last year. Deterrents are balanced by incentives. Pupils' attendance is carefully monitored by the headteacher. Unexplained absences and unusual patterns of absence are followed up promptly, and persistent absentees are referred to the education welfare service. Good attendance is rewarded by merit certificates. Pupils also participate in local authority initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of attending school.

38. The school has high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. These are summarised in its code of conduct and classroom rules, and are clearly set out in the home/school contract, the school prospectus and notices around the buildings. Pupils and parents are therefore aware of what the school requires, and know that bullying, aggression and rudeness are not acceptable behaviour. The school has put in place comprehensive and very effective measures to promote high standards of behaviour. There is an appropriate scale of sanctions and rewards, a suitable policy on combating bullying and thorough procedures for monitoring behaviour. Exclusion is used as a sanction, but only for very serious breaches of discipline and as a last resort. The level and quality of supervision at lunchtime is very good. Supervisors are well briefed and are given good guidance on managing the pupils' behaviour. Pupils appreciate the work of staff in maintaining good order and discipline, and when speaking to members of the inspection team, praised teachers and supervisors for dealing effectively with problems. The school's behaviour co-ordinator plays a major part in monitoring and raising standards. She works closely with the local education authority to implement its 'Framework for Intervention', an initiative which gives staff support and guidance in managing the pupils' behaviour. Use of the 'Framework' in the school has encouraged teachers to exchange information and advice, and share good practice. This assists them in coping in the classroom with some very demanding pupils.

39. Systems for assessing the pupils' attainment are good overall. They have been developed and improved well since the last inspection. Baseline testing is now well established for children in the reception class, and the information gained is used effectively in planning the provision for individual pupils. The results of the National Curriculum and other tests in English, mathematics and science are regularly analysed. This enables the school to keep track of the progress made by each pupil, identify differences in the attainments of boys and girls, and identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning in each part of the curriculum. In English, for example, the school made a decision to focus on extended writing, and in mathematics to highlight data handling, as a result of test analysis. In Literacy, the pupils are set targets in writing, reading and spelling that are regularly monitored, but as yet, there is no formal monitoring of pupils' attainments in speaking and listening. In mathematics, targets for groups of pupils have been established and individual targets are planned for the next academic year. In science, end of topic tests are completed and the results well recorded. The assessment of standards in most of the other subjects follows the same format. The school has good procedures for the assessment of pupils with special educational needs, but there is a reluctance to put the names of pupils forward for assessment and inclusion on the school's register. As a result, the school appears to have a broadly average proportion of such pupils, whereas the true level of learning and other difficulties is significantly higher.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. As at the time of the previous inspection, parents who attended the per-inspection meeting and who returned the questionnaire express mainly satisfactory views about the school. Most are happy with the quality of teaching and the progress that their children are making. Nearly all the respondents to the inspection questionnaire say that their children like school and are expected to work hard. However, a significant number of parents are dissatisfied with standards of behaviour, the amount and consistency of homework that their children are given, and the range of extra curricular activities. They are also critical of the school's management and the quality of home/school partnership. Similar views were expressed at the parents' meeting with the registered inspector. The level of dissatisfaction is higher today than it was in 1996. However, it should be noted that on both occasions only a minority of parents took part in the inspection survey. It is therefore possible that their views are not representative of the parent body as a whole. With very few exceptions, evidence gathered during the current inspection fails to substantiate the minority opinion. On the contrary, the findings uphold the views of the majority that the school has an effective partnership with parents and has made improvements since the last inspection.

41. The school has good and effective links with the parents. The quality of information for parents is good overall. The school prospectus and annual report of the governing body meet legal requirements. The former contains much useful information for parents of new pupils. The school works hard to develop the home/school partnership. It has put in place a system of home/school contracts that spell out the rights and responsibilities of all parties. Its provision has many strengths, and by effectively encouraging families to become involved in pupils' learning, enhances standards of attainment. The school has appointed a links co-ordinator who is currently looking at ways to improve to information for parents, for example by re-wording reports and targets to make them more easily understood. It makes very good arrangements for advising parents about what their children are learning. Class teachers send home letters outlining the topics to be covered in the course of the term, and there are workshops for parents to help them understand the curriculum. Those that are organised as part of the "INSPIRE" initiative, give parents the opportunity to come into school and work alongside their children in reading and mathematics. The quality of day-to-day information on pupils' work is satisfactory. Pupils take their reading records home for parents to see, and to use when they hear their child read. If parents have any concerns, they have plenty of opportunities to meet teachers on an informal basis and discuss problems. The school successfully operates an 'open door' policy, and most parents say that they would feel comfortable about approaching members of staff with questions. The majority who completed the inspection questionnaire felt that that they were well informed about how their children are getting. In contrast, those who attended the meeting with the registered inspector were unhappy with provision for parents' consultation evenings. The inspection findings support the majority view. The school makes satisfactory formal arrangements for informing parents of their children's progress. Annual written reports, although often bland and generalised, comply with legal requirements. There are two consultation evenings per class per year, which give parents adequate opportunities to discuss their children's targets and reports with members of staff.

42. Families give good support to their children's learning, both in school and at home. The level of direct parental involvement in lessons is high. This is the result of the school's policy of recruiting and training parents as helpers. A significant number now act as volunteer helpers in the classroom. Teachers value the contribution

that they make to lessons, particularly in the areas of reading and computer skills. Parents also attend consultation evenings and celebration assemblies in large numbers. Events organised by the recently revived Friends of Stirchley School receive good support. The governing body has its full quota of parent governors. They are actively involved in the life of the school and regularly help out in the classroom. The majority of parents make a good contribution to children's learning at home. Families are encouraged to hear children read and are given guidance on how to help them with other forms of homework. Their response is positive, and has a beneficial effect on the pupils' attainment and progress. For example, children say that their parents look at their reading records and take a general interest in what they are learning. Many of the pupils who are not yet fully independent readers, say that at least one member of the family regularly hears them read at home, and that they find this helpful.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. The quality of management and leadership in the school as a whole is good, and has improved exceptionally well since the last inspection when it was judged to be weak. The new headteacher, who has been in post for three years, provides highly effective all round leadership, and is ably supported by other staff in posts of responsibility. The headteacher has been very successful in establishing a clear educational direction for the school that is firmly focused on raising standards, improving the quality of education provided. The headteacher has also been successful in gaining shared commitment for her vision from all staff and governors, and this creates a sense of cohesion and purpose in the work of the school as a whole. The school achieved a large degree of success in meeting its declared aims.

44. The governors, and the headteacher responded positively to the last inspection report, and have made very good progress in improving the areas of the school that were deemed to have weaknesses. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved at a rate faster than the national trend. The quality of teaching is now good overall and the proportion of very good or better teaching has improved markedly. Assessment procedures have improved very well and assessment information is effectively analysed to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and bring about changes in the curriculum if necessary. Curriculum planning has improved greatly and is used effectively by teachers to ensure that the pupils learn in a continuous and progressive way. The roles and responsibilities of the senior management team and governors are now very clear, and the governing body are now fully involved in the leadership and management of the school, including the monitoring and evaluation of its work. Attendance rates have improved, although they are still unsatisfactory. The provision for the pupils' social and moral development is now strong. The school has not established an improving trend in its National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 1, and this remains a significant weakness.

45. Subject co-ordinate and other teachers who co-ordinate the work of the school, such as assessment, and special educational needs, carry out their roles very effectively, and make a very good contribution to the continuing improvements in the school. They play an active part in developing their curriculum areas, monitor the teachers' plans and evaluate the standards of work that pupils produce. The monitoring role is best developed in literacy and numeracy, but there are plans to extend this work into all subjects. Provision for children in the foundation stage is managed very well, and results in very good opportunities for learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed well.

46. The Governing Body is highly supportive of the work of the school. Their involvement in the leadership and management of the school has increased greatly since the appointment of the new headteacher. Frequent visits, regular attendance at meetings and the supply of a considerable amount of information enables them to understand clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the school and take a full role in shaping its educational direction. Governors are suitably involved in development and budget planning processes.

47. The quality of financial planning is good, and the funds received by the school, including specific grants are used effectively to promote good learning and a good quality of education overall. The school's priorities are supported well by the provision of funds, for example, the leasing of computers in the newly opened suite, to improve standards in information and communications technology. The headteacher and governors monitor the school's spending closely against the planned budget, and keep a reasonable surplus. If a larger than normal surplus is built up, it is for a planned purpose and not a result of poor management. Through the diligent and effective work of the school secretary, the school purchases its goods at highly competitive rates, and applies the principles of 'best value'. All of the non-teaching staff, make a very valuable contribution to the day-to-day running of the school and the maintenance of its warm, friendly atmosphere. The caretaker, supported by the cleaning staff, works tirelessly to provide the best possible environment for learning. The school makes good use of new technology in its administration.

48. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall. The school is adequately staffed with appropriately qualified teachers to meet the needs of the curriculum. The number of teaching staff is about average for this size of school. Many teachers have considerable experience, but with recent appointments providing a balance of younger, less experienced staff. Responsibility for subject management does not completely match subject specialisms but where there is a mismatch, experience, attendance of relevant courses and the individual interest of teachers ensures that all areas are covered well. Religious education, which was highlighted during the last inspection as being an area where there was insufficient knowledge, is now an established and satisfactory part of the school's curriculum. The individual strengths of teachers are well used, with experienced teachers deployed with classes where there are challenging pupils, or an above average number of pupils with special educational needs. The number of support staff is about average for this size of school. Their qualifications and experience is well matched to the needs of the school curriculum. The support of pupils who do not have English as a first language has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory.

49. The school's induction process is good, supports new staff well and enables them to be quickly assimilated into the life of the school. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are good, and the dissemination of information gained on in-service training is carried out effectively. The professional training of staff is linked to the school's needs as laid out in the development plan, and also to individual needs of teachers. This is effective in supporting the aims of the school, as shown by the enhanced provision of information technology. Quite reasonably, staff appraisal has been suspended at present whilst the procedures for performance management are introduced. The school is in a good position to introduce procedures for performance management of teaching staff.

50. The accommodation is satisfactory. The school occupies a secure site in a built up area. The building is in a sound state of repair and is brightly decorated. The play areas around the school are spacious, but do not provide a stimulating environment for learning or play. The area slopes, making the teaching of games difficult. There is no grass playing field. The play area for the under fives is secure, however this area also slopes steeply, making the pupils' use of wheeled toys difficult, and at times dangerous, when the toys run out of control into children who are playing. The classrooms are light and have adequate space. There is a spacious hall, which is set up as a permanent role-play area for the younger pupils. Classrooms in the Key Stage 2 area upstairs do not have individual sink facilities, but the school has successfully addressed this by the provision of a spacious specialist art area which has these facilities, and is available for classes. The school now has a spacious information technology area, which is capable of housing complete classes with two pupils sharing each computer. These facilities are starting to raise standards in information and communications technology. The downstairs hall is adequate for physical education lessons but this is also used as a thoroughfare, distracting pupils from their learning and inhibiting progress. The school has adequate facilities for pupils who have physical disabilities on the ground floor, but there is no access to the upper floor. The school makes effective use of the corridors as display areas for pupils' work, and overall has worked hard to make an inconvenient building a stimulating learning environment for the pupils, which promotes their learning well. The accommodation has been significantly improved since the last inspection.

51. Resources overall are satisfactory, and in science they are good. The provision of materials and equipment in classrooms is adequate and the provision of books is good. There are a good number of computers to support learning in information technology, a significant improvement since the last inspection. However, the provision of software to support learning across the curriculum is in need of development. The school has already taken steps to improve their expertise in this area so that suitable software can be acquired, as funds become available. Resources for religious education, which were inadequate at the time of the last inspection, are now satisfactory. Resources have improved since the last inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. In their work to further raise standards and improve the quality of education at the school, the governors and staff should now consider the following key issues, which relate to the areas for improvement identified in the report paragraphs shown:

- Improve the standards attained by pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2, and work to reduce the fluctuations in standards at the end of Key Stage 1 by: (paragraphs: 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 61, 62, 64, 65, 68, 69, 72, 73, 74)

Using assessment data to set and monitor individual targets for development in the core subjects;

Using assessment data more rigorously to ensure that high attaining pupils are consistently challenged in the work that they are set;

- Improve the pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of a rich and varied vocabulary in writing and speaking by: (paragraphs: 1, 3, 6, 26, 39, 53, 62, 63)

Identifying key concepts and vocabulary within each topic of work across all subjects of the curriculum, and ensure pupils can use them with confidence in their work;

Providing increased opportunities for pupils throughout the school to speak for different purposes and to different audiences;

- Improve the level of attendance to at least the national average by: (paragraphs: 15, 37)

Setting targets for attendance for individuals and classes;

Introducing more incentives for individuals and classes of pupils;

Persisting in communications with parents regarding the importance of good attendance;

- Improve the levels of pupils' independence and maturity in their approach to learning by: (paragraphs 9, 11, 14)

Providing increased opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning as they move through the school;

Planning and implementing progressive opportunities for pupils to develop study and research skills that will equip them to carry out independent work;

Other points to consider for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

- Improve the outdoor play area that slopes steeply and provides a poor environment for play and learning. (paragraphs: 35, 59)
- Identify and assess pupils with special educational needs more quickly to ensure that the true level of needs in the school is not under-estimated. (paragraph: 39)
- Improve the behaviour management strategies of teachers so that they can maintain the motivation and good behaviour of the most difficult pupils. (paragraphs: 12, 19, 66)
- Expand the range of extra-curricular opportunities available to the pupils. (paragraphs: 32)
- Improve the quality of reports on the pupils' progress. (paragraphs: 41)
- Improve standards in information technology. (paragraphs: 7, 89, 90)
- Improve the quality and frequency of marking of the pupils' work. (paragraphs: 23)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	10	47	27	5	2	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	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	183
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	-	67

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		46

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	31

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	1.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	15	15	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	9	10
	Girls	13	14	14
	Total	20	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67	77	80
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	9	9
	Girls	13	13	15
	Total	20	22	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67	73	80
	National	82	86	87

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	14	11	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	10	10
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	14	16	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	56	64	64
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	10	11
	Girls	7	7	8
	Total	14	17	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	56	68	76
	National	68	69	75

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	12
Chinese	0
White	122
Any other minority ethnic group	10

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.5
Average class size	26.1

Education support staff: YR - Y6

Total number of education support staff	2.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	66

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
	£
Total income	467080
Total expenditure	459446
Expenditure per pupil	2137
Balance brought forward from previous year	34170
Balance carried forward to next year	41804

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Number of questionnaires sent out:	209
Number of questionnaires returned:	31
Percentage return	15

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes the school	71	29	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school	69	23	4	7	0
Behaviour in school is good	31	46	15	11	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	23	46	26	7	0
The teaching is good	62	30	7	4	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	53	46	0	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems	64	25	14	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	59	41	0	4	0
The school works closely with parents	39	39	21	4	0
The school is well led and managed	35	36	18	11	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	54	38	4	4	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	22	28	26	19	8

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

PROVISION FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE

53. Children enter the nursery at the beginning of the school year in which they become four, and the reception class at the beginning of the year in which they become five. Most of the children in the nursery attend part time. They also attend school part time for their first two weeks in the reception class. Only around half of the children in the nursery enter the reception class, the remaining transfer to other schools in the area. Most reception children, on the other hand, have attended the Stirchley nursery class. At the time of the inspection, the children had only been in school for a few days. Indeed, some nursery children were admitted during the inspection week. It is not possible, therefore, to predict the likelihood of their achieving the nationally expected early learning goals by the time they reach the end of the Foundation Stage. Discussion with teachers and examination of the records of last year's reception class, indicate that most of the children achieved the early learning goals for personal, social, emotional, physical and creative development. About three quarters of the children reached the goals for the other areas of learning. Many children enter the nursery with poorly developed communication, language, literacy, mathematical and social skills, and baseline assessments confirm that these are still below expectations on entry to the reception class. This is partly because many of the high attaining children have transferred to other schools by this stage. The children make at least sound and sometimes good progress towards the achievement of the early learning goals during both the nursery and reception years, because of the very good quality of teaching and learning opportunities that they receive.

54. Overall provision for children at the Foundation Stage is very good, and is a strength of the school. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was at least good in all the areas of learning, and some was very good. In an occasional lesson it was excellent. The strength of the teaching is that it is based partly on a very good understanding of the needs of young children, and partly on the infectious enthusiasm of individual teachers. The children are provided with a rich, secure and exciting learning environment. Planning and assessment are effective. Children for whom English is an additional language are well supported by the school staff, but have no extra specialist help to assist them in their early stages of learning the language. The quality of provision for children under the age of five has been maintained since the previous inspection. Whilst standards at the age of five have fallen, this is due to the lower attainment levels of the children when they enter the school, and is not related to the quality of education that they receive.

Personal, social and emotional development

55. In both year groups, the children work and play well together. Teaching supports their development very well through carefully structured activities and through the positive relationships with the adults present, all of whom provide very good role models. At the time of the inspection, some of the youngest children in the nursery, hardly surprisingly, found it difficult to work or play independently without direct adult support. By the time they reach the reception class, however, most have learned enough social skills to enable them to participate in a wide range of activities without supervision, and have the confidence to co-operate well with one another.

Communication, language and literacy

56. The quality of teaching in this aspect of the children's development is very good. Teachers use all possible opportunities to help the children develop their understanding and use of language, and provide stimulating activities that promote learning well. Most of the children enjoy listening to stories. In the nursery class they are exposed to a wide range of activities designed to develop their language skills. These include successful role-playing a doctor's surgery. By the time they reach the reception class, they know how to turn the pages of a book, distinguish between the front and the back, and appreciate that print carries meaning. Most recognise a few words from the school's reading scheme and can use picture cues. Children are often engaged in planned and spontaneous conversations, and in both classes, their views and suggestions are treated with respect. Overall, however, the language development of most children is below what one would expect for this age.

Mathematical development

57. The quality of teaching in this aspect of the children's development is very good. Basic counting is regularly reinforced in both classes by counting everyday objects. Learning about numbers is made fun in the reception class through the use of many carefully designed questions that enable the teacher to assess the children's current stage of progress. Children regularly sing number songs, say number rhymes and play counting games. Shapes are explored well using materials such as play dough, and children experiment with volume using sand and water trays. Children in the nursery recognise the numerals 1 to 5 and can discriminate between them. Some reception children know the names of simple shapes and can count up to ten objects with ease. Most, however, find such activities difficult without direct adult support.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

58. The very good teaching that the children receive is based on a wide range of activities that give first hand experience and opportunities for exploration and discussion. Nursery children are beginning to use a computer with adult help, while those in the reception class successfully use a mouse to control simple programs. Both groups have the opportunity to use a range of construction apparatus and reception children, in particular, use this effectively to make a variety of models of their own choice. In a particularly successful lesson in the reception class, the complex issue of God's anger towards humanity at the time of Noah's Ark was explored in a particularly vibrant and challenging way. As a result the children's rate of learning was very good, and most were enabled to empathise with God's attitudes and begin to understand their own moods and feelings.

Physical development

59. Here the rate of learning is good, and by the time they reach Year 1, most children have met the early learning goal. It was only possible to see a limited amount of teaching in this area during the inspection, all outside in the playground. Most children catch and throw with appropriate co-ordination and run with control and balance. The outside play area used by nursery and reception children is secure, but slopes steeply and is unsatisfactory overall.

Creative development

60. The children's rate of learning in this area is also good in response to the very good teaching that they receive. A wide range of activities is provided. Children in the nursery, for example, gain tactile and creative experience through making handprints with paint. Those in the reception class successfully use scissors to cut out shapes of birds and attach corrugated paper wings to these. Most have a good knowledge of colours and can mix paints well to achieve a desired effect. There are many opportunities to sing a range of popular songs and these are well appreciated by the children. Computer programs are also used successfully by children to explore aspects of simple composition.

ENGLISH

61. In the 1999 National Curriculum assessments of seven year olds, results were below the national average in writing and well below average in reading. Key Stage 1 results dipped even further in the Year 2000 assessments due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in that particular year group. In the 1999 tests of eleven year olds, results were also well below the national average, although they were close to the average for similar schools. Results of the Year 2000 assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, however, were a significant improvement on the previous year, especially in reading. English results since the last inspection indicate a steady improvement at Key Stage 2, greater than the national trend, although those at Key Stage 1 fluctuate more.

62. The findings of the inspection broadly support these National Curriculum assessment results. Standards in English overall in the current Year 6, which contains a significant number of pupils with special educational needs, are below expected levels, but in other parts of the school, including Key Stage 1, there is evidence of rising standards across the subject. Standards in Years 1 and 2, for example, are close to those expected. Within English, reading is a relative strength, while writing and speaking and listening are relative weaknesses. Many pupils enter the school with below average language skills. Achievement at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. At the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 2 it is satisfactory and sometimes good, particularly when pupils have the opportunity to experience very good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory gains in learning. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. The recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy are firmly

implemented and this is having a positive effect on pupils' progress and quality of learning in English. Literacy is also developed well in other subjects, such as religious education and science, and the Literacy Hour itself contributes well to the delivery of subjects including history. The school has set suitably stringent targets to further raise standards in literacy, and these are on course to being met.

63. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills, both during literacy lessons and across the subjects of the curriculum. These include class discussion times and assemblies. Older pupils debate issues that are significant to them. As yet, however, there is no consistent programme of developing pupils' skills in this area of English. A significant number of pupils enter the school with poor speaking and listening skills, and standards continue to be below expected levels at the end of both key stages. In a religious education lesson at Key Stage 1, for example, pupils discussed 'saying thank you to God', but many found difficulty in finding the words to express their views effectively. In another, at the end of Key Stage 2, several pupils, although interested in the topic being explored, were not prepared to listen to the views of others. Appropriately, there are plans to consolidate the very good practice of several teachers into a structured programme of teaching speaking and listening skills throughout the school in the near future.

64. Pupils are well supported in the early stages of learning to read. A main core reading scheme is well supplemented by a range of other resources, including a series of books designed to develop pupils' phonic skills. By the end of Key Stage 1, most become quite fluent readers by using a range of strategies to decipher unfamiliar text and obtain meaning. At this stage, however, a significant minority of pupils still rely too heavily on picture clues to recognise words. When reading 'Kim's Little Friend', Year 1 pupils show interest in the text and comprehend it well. Year 2 pupils enjoy exploring 'Solomon Grundy', and have a developing understanding of rhyme. For a number of pupils, however, reading is an activity that is largely restricted to school, and this inhibits their acquisition of these skills. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils express preferences in literature and display an appropriate level of comprehension. Standards, however, vary from year to year, and in the current Year 6 are below average overall, largely because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the class. Nevertheless some higher achieving pupils have well-developed reading skills. They are fluent and expressive readers who respond to nuances in text, distinguish between different literary genre, and understand how to use higher order research skills to find information. Many pupils, however, are unclear about how to use the school library which, although attractive and well stocked with good quality books, was underused at the time of the inspection. The school is appropriately planning to develop pupils' library skills further later in the term, in co-operation with the local branch of the city library. The school's relatively recent introduction of timetabled and focused guided reading lessons is already having a positive effect on raising standards.

65. A wide range of approaches is also used to support the development of the pupils' writing. In the earlier stages, pupils are encouraged to express themselves through simple writing and are well supported through the Literacy Hour. They learn to use simple dictionaries and personal wordbooks. By the end of Key Stage 1, higher attaining pupils produce clear descriptive and imaginative writing, which is appropriately punctuated. For a significant number of pupils, however, spelling is unsatisfactory, and the content of stories is distinguished by limited vocabulary and little depth of imagination. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils write for a wide variety of purposes and audiences. They prepare interviews and play scripts. They design advertisements, some, such as one trying to obtain foster parents for a child, being quite emotive. Newspaper reports are produced and non-fiction articles, including one on spiders, are often structured into paragraphs. Letters are properly laid out, and some, such as one complaining to the local council, are very expressive. Higher attaining pupils produce well-written stories using a variety of short and complex sentences, metaphors and colloquialisms. Standards overall, however, are still below average at the end of this key stage. Nevertheless, the successful implementation of the Literacy Hour has already improved the quality of writing in the school. The recent introduction of regular extended writing lessons is another indication of the school's determination to raise standards further. It is too soon yet to judge the likely effectiveness of the latter strategy.

66. Most pupils behave well in English lessons and have positive attitudes towards them because the quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory. In a majority of lessons the enthusiastic approach of the teacher prompts pupils to keenly express their views, although in a few lessons they are reluctant to volunteer answers to questions unless prompted by their teachers, due to a lack of confidence in their speaking skills. In a majority of lessons teaching is good and occasionally it is excellent. Teachers at both key stages show a good understanding of the subject and of the implications of the National Literacy Strategy. They use a good range of methods that capture and maintain the interest of the pupils well, as for example when teachers ask the whole class to read and when pupils share their learning with one another at the end of a lesson. Activities mostly have an appropriate level of challenge, which supports overall learning, and are relevant to the needs of different ability groups in a class. Questioning is frequently effective and open ended, focusing pupils' well on the

learning they are trying to achieve. Pupil management is positive and, in most lessons, results in good behaviour and successful relationships. Occasionally, the pace of a lesson is too gentle, and pupils' learning is adversely affected because some pupils display challenging behaviour by calling out inappropriately and failing to concentrate on their work. Conversely, in the most successful lessons, the teacher's lively, dynamic exposition had a very positive effect on the pupils' pace of learning. Her use of a very good range of methods, combined with a high level of challenge, contributed very well to the advancement of pupils' language skills, and class management is excellent.

67. The school has a very high regard for the importance of English within the curriculum. The subject is well managed. The co-ordinator has a clear view of future areas for development and successfully monitors planning and delivery. Good structures are in place for planning, assessment and record keeping. Information and communications technology is being used increasingly well as the school continues to make full use of its new computer suite.

MATHEMATICS

68. National Curriculum test results for 1999 indicate that at the end of Key Stage 1, standards are well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. Pupils show better competencies at using and applying mathematics than in the other areas or the mathematics curriculum. There is a trend of improving standards, at a rate faster than the national trend, although there are great variations in standards from year to year due to the proportion of pupils in each year group with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. Overall at this key stage, the results of boys and girls are similar. The 1999 test results for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 indicate that standards are below the national average, but reach the average for similar schools. In this key stage there is a trend of improving standards, at a rate faster than the national trend, and it is clear that the school is closing the gap between its own performance and the national average. At this key stage, the performance of boys is better than that of girls by the equivalent of about one term's work. Although as yet unpublished, this year's results indicate that results are continuing to improve.

69. Work seen during the inspection shows that the standard of work of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 is below that expected nationally. By the end of this key stage, most pupils of average ability have a secure knowledge of the appropriate language of mathematics and are able to use number bonds up to ten in addition and subtraction. They have an understanding of a half and a quarter and can measure lengths and weights using non-standard units. Many can use a centimetre ruler to measure lengths, but with varying degrees of accuracy. More able pupils can measure the lengths of the sides of simple shapes and draw them on squared paper. Through links with art and the painting of butterflies, pupils show a good understanding of what symmetry means with respect to a plane shape. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 is below the standards expected nationally. By the end of this key stage many pupils have a sound understanding of addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. Their understanding of decimals is developing slowly, for example, many pupils can multiply decimal numbers less than ten by single digits. However questions related to the equivalence of simple fractions and decimals, and number questions presented as word problems, are generally less well attempted, and many are unlikely to reach the expected standards by the end of the key stage. Pupils can list some of the properties of the simple solids and understand that data can be represented in various ways, although questions involving grouped data are less successfully tackled. The pupils' competence in numeracy is satisfactorily supported across the curriculum through the use of measuring and weighing in science and time lines in history for example. Pupils' attainment is below that recorded during the last inspection.

70. The quality of teaching overall is good. In Key Stage 1 it is satisfactory and good in equal proportions. There is a wider range in Key Stage 2, from unsatisfactory to excellent, but overall the quality is good in this key stage. The standard of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers generally display sound and sometimes very good subject knowledge. All sessions are well planned and organised, ensuring that pupils of all abilities are provided with relevant interesting and challenging activities. This ensures that pupils respond in a motivated manner and that lessons are enjoyed. In Year 4, for example, pupils of all abilities work hard to reinforce subtraction skills and develop decision-making skills while playing a number game in pairs. All pupils play the same game, however, the numbers they use are appropriate for their different attainment levels. A very well planned and structured lesson in Year 5 enabled pupils of all abilities to successfully cope with the place value of negative numbers and the differences between pairs of them. In a minority of lessons, worksheets are not sufficiently well structured for the pupils to carry out the work without extra support, and this means that a number of pupils require help in the early stages of their individual work. In effective lessons teachers work hard to develop the pupils understanding and use of appropriate mathematical terminology by building into the

lessons opportunities for pupils to speak about what they are learning. In Year 1, for example, after the teacher has described a number of plane shapes and different pupils have found them, the pupils take turns in describing shapes for other pupils to find. Teachers support learning well through the use of imaginative resources. Many of these are homemade and include a 'greedy shape box', a decimal number line and 'crocodile jaws' representing "greater than" and "less than" symbols, all very effective in the lessons of which they formed a part. In the most successful lessons, the teachers organise a good range of activities and there is purposeful activity throughout. In these lessons any misbehaviour by pupils is dealt with pleasantly and effectively so that the pace of the lesson is maintained. Mental arithmetic sessions are well organised and teachers use a good variety of methods to support pupils' learning. Pupils in Year 2 and 5 are helped to memorise their multiplication tables by reciting them "army style" together, for example, an activity clearly enjoyed by all. In a number of sessions, however, pupils are inactive because teachers use much of the time asking individual pupils questions. Little use of methods like number cards, which would enable whole class response to take place, is evident. The use of open-ended questions, which would enable pupils of different abilities to respond at their own level during mental sessions, is also limited. In general teachers' questioning of pupils is clear and pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well known. Consequently pupils of all abilities are involved in class question and answer sessions, and this they do with appropriate confidence. Good relationships exist in all classrooms, and because of this pupils are able to accept constructive criticism as part of their learning process. Classroom assistants are well deployed to provide good support for less able pupils when they are working individually or in small groups. Overall pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress. Homework supports learning satisfactorily.

71. The curriculum complies with national guidelines, and the National Numeracy Strategy is well established. This, and the emphasis on improving pupils' mental arithmetic skills are already having a positive impact on progress. The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator, who meticulously monitors teachers' planning, teaching and pupils' work. The assessment procedures are good, and they too are monitored and analysed in order to track pupils progress and inform teaching. As a result of this, the school recognised the need to highlight data handling skills more in future teaching and has also identified a target group of pupils in each year group who are not fulfilling their potential. The school has already introduced the use of group targets and is planning to develop this further by the introduction of individual pupil targets in the coming year. The support of the subject by information technology is in the process of development. Accommodation and resources are adequate.

SCIENCE

72. Results of the National Curriculum teacher assessments for 1999 show that that pupils' attainments at the end of Key Stage 1 were well below the national average and below that of similar schools. No pupils exceeded the expected level 2 in 1999. These results show a fall in standards since the last inspection. The end of Key Stage 2 test results for 1999 show that standards are well below both the national average and that of similar schools, and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level was well below the national picture. Trends over the last three years show that standards are rising at a rate faster than the national picture. The results in the 2000 tests show a dramatic improvement in standards, with almost all pupils reaching the expected Level 4, and double the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5. This improvement stemmed from major changes in the curriculum, brought about by the co-ordinator's analysis of the performance of pupils in the tests. She devised and provided for the pupils, a thorough revision programme prior to the tests, and this equipped them with improved knowledge and understanding of science, and better techniques for tackling the tests. Since the last inspection there has been a remarkable improvement in the Key Stage 2 test results, which have risen from 18 per cent gaining Level 4 in 1997, to 95 per cent in 2000. Girls and boys attain equally well in the tests, and during the inspection, there was no discernible difference between the performance of boys and girls in lessons.

73. Work seen during the inspection shows that by the end of Key Stage 1, the attainments of pupils are below the expectations for their age. Pupils in Year 1 show awareness of their senses and can name the parts of the body that are used to sense things. They find difficulty in describing the touch and taste of things because of their poorly developed language skills, despite the teacher's consistently good use of such language. Pupils in Year 2 have a clear understanding that when forces are applied to object, some change shape and others do not. Their use of language to describe the forces being applied to objects is poorly developed.

74. Standards of work seen during the inspection are a little below those expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 2. The pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills continue to be built on systematically, and progress is satisfactory. The strong emphasis on practical investigations and experiments develops a secure understanding of how to conduct a fair test at the end of the key stage. For example, Year 6 pupils designed a

series of tests to investigate the conditions needed for healthy plant growth, and were keen to ensure that only one factor was changed with each of the plants used. The pupils' understanding and use of language in reading, writing and speaking inhibits their learning, and this is the major factor in keeping their attainments below those expected for pupils of this age. Throughout both key stages, the rate of learning of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, is satisfactory.

75. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and is good at Key Stage 2. The teachers have clear understanding of what they want the pupils to learn within each lesson, and by explaining this carefully to the pupils, motivate them to concentrate and strive to achieve what is planned. In the most successful lessons, teachers involve the pupils in reviewing their own progress towards the intended learning, at stages through the lesson, as well as at the end. This again motivates the pupils to work hard, because they can understand how much they are learning. The teachers' good subject knowledge is demonstrated well in whole class sessions, where they provide accurate information and ask challenging questions which make the pupils think carefully about their work. Whilst the teacher's planning is clear regarding the activities and organisation of the lesson, it does not consistently take into account the differing learning needs of the pupils in the class. This was illustrated well in a Year 2 lesson, where the same task was set for all pupils, resulting in middle and high attaining pupils being insufficiently challenged by the work that they had to do, and consequently learning little from it. Also the amount of work expected of middle and high attainers did not promote sufficient learning. Learning is promoted very effectively when teachers provide well organised opportunities for pupils to investigate and experiment. This was exemplified well in an excellent Year 5 lesson. By asked probing, incisive questions, the pupils rapidly increased their understanding of the force of gravity, and by familiarising the pupils with the equipment that they would be using and giving clear instructions about what they were to investigate, the pupils could start work immediately and purposefully. All pupils were able to make significant gains in learning because they were provided with differing methods of recording their findings, to match their particular level of attainment. Teachers manage the pupils well by their calm and friendly approach, and the pupils respond with mainly good behaviour and considerable interest.

76. The leadership and management of the subject are very good overall. The co-ordinator has an extremely secure grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject, and supports the other staff well. Procedures for assessing the pupils' attainments and progress have developed very well since the previous inspection, particularly at Key Stage 2, and further work is planned to improve assessment at Key Stage 1. The co-ordinators' development and implementation of a revision programme in Year 6 last year, played a major part in improving the standards attained in the National Curriculum tests in 2000.

ART

77. The attainment of pupils at the end of both key stages is in line with national expectations, maintaining the standards shown during the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make sound progress overall. During Key Stage 1 pupils experience a wide range of activities and media, enabling them to explore pattern colour and shape. They use paint, brush, crayon and pencil and learn to control these effectively. In Year 2, for example, pupils of all abilities successfully using card view-finders to focus on a portion of a picture, develop observational skills and produce appropriate pencil sketches of their individual pictures. Pupils work competently in three-dimensions, sometimes on topics linked with design and technology. In the reception class, for example, the children painted the buses that they had designed and produced, and in Year 2 they combining bright colours on their 'Elmer Elephants'. Pupils experiment with prints and these skills develop satisfactorily. By the end of the key stage, pupils have a sound appreciation of the work of famous artists. Pupils in Year 2, for example, experience working in the style of Van Gough and reproduce their personal versions of 'Irises'. Pupils' knowledge of famous paintings is well supported by a variety of prints accompanied by relevant questions found on the walls of corridors throughout the school. In Key Stage 2 pupils gain further experience of colour mixing, and Year 6 pupils put their skills to good effect and produce spectacular sunrises in the style of Georgina O' Keefe. Pupils across the key stage have a good knowledge of the work of a wide range of artists from old masters to modern day artists. Pupils use art to express their feelings about books they read and the covers of their book reviews in Years 5 and 6 are effectively detailed.

78. Based on the small number of art lessons observed during the inspection, evidence of the work done before this and conversations with pupils, the teaching of art overall is good. Teachers display sound subject knowledge and plan lessons of suitable challenge for the range of pupils in their classes. In a Year 3 lesson based on repeating patterns, for example, the teacher provides samples of patterned material for each child and ensures that pupils who have special educational needs receive samples that are appropriate for them, as do

the most able etcetera. The pupils respond well to this and motivation is maintained throughout the lesson. Relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils are good, enabling learning to proceed with minimum disruptions. In effective lessons teachers have clear learning objectives, the ability to communicate these effectively and, by skilful questioning, enable pupils to suggest ways of improving their own work. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, where pupils work in pairs sketching an action sequence, the teacher questions pairs of pupils about their individual sequences and the problems of balance related to this so that pupils adjusted their poses in order to take up positions that are more stable. This encourages the pupils to work with increased involvement, less disturbed by partners over-balancing. Some teachers use a review session at the end of lessons effectively to highlight good practice evident in a range of pupils' work, thus sharing good ideas as well as motivating the chosen pupils. This does not always take place, however and these positive opportunities are missed. Most teachers display a range of pupils' work well, even this early in the academic year and classroom and corridor displays are of good quality. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection. The pupils display good attitudes to learning. They show interest in the topics they cover and take a pride in their completed tasks. Teachers encourage pupils of all ages to be responsible about equipment and to clear up efficiently after practical sessions. Thus most pupils display responsible attitudes and when necessary they move about the classroom sensibly even when not under the direct gaze of the teacher.

79. The curriculum is broad, suitably balanced and based on a national scheme. The support of the curriculum by relevant visits and visitors has been very limited during the last year, but the new subject co-ordinator has highlighted this as an area for development together with the use of information technology and the Internet to enhance teaching and learning. These aspects are, at present, underdeveloped. Assessment procedures have been developed since the last inspection and these are now satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has not been in post long enough to have monitored either aspects of teaching or learning. There is a spacious specialist art area for use by Key Stage 2 pupils who do not have water and sink facilities in their individual classrooms. Art contributes well to the pupils' cultural development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

80. The attainment of pupils at the end of both key stages is in line with national expectations and has improved since the last inspection. The progress of pupils in both key stages, including those pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Pupils in the foundation stage receive an effective grounding in the subject and gain a sound appreciation of linked parts through the construction of items like elephants' heads, which have hinged ears and trunks. This develops throughout Key Stage 1 and by the end of the key stage pupils know that by the use of levers, for example, parts can be made to move, as in the 'Elmer elephant' topic where pupils, using split pins and cardboard levers make 'Elmer's' legs move. Pupils gain sound knowledge of mechanisms and how they can be used in different ways. Pupils in reception design and make buses, which can be moved when pushed, using pieces of dowel, wheels and boxes. By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2 their skills and knowledge have developed to the stage where they successfully design and make cars which are capable of travelling unaided for a metre up a thirty degree incline. A variety of materials are used competently. Year 1 pupils design and make fabric glove puppets while Year 5 pupils discover the range of materials which are used to stuff a variety of soft toys. Pupils throughout the key stages are well used to the procedure of plan, do and review both on an individual and group basis. No examples of food technology were evident during the week of the inspection but evidence indicates that it is covered satisfactorily. Pupils' progress is soundly supported by the concentrated experience of a science and technology week and also some links with companies. Pupils with English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress relative to their individual abilities.

81. Only a small number of design and technology lessons were observed during the week of the inspection so no overall judgement on the quality of teaching can be made. The lessons observed were of good and very good quality where effective discipline was based on friendly and positive relationships, enabling teaching and learning to proceed efficiently. In both lessons planning was appropriate and the sessions well organised, ensuring that no time was wasted during the lessons. Teachers' explanations were clear and pupils responded well to these, feeling secure in their understanding of the tasks set. Resources were particularly well used in one lesson, where pupils cut up old toys to discover what range of materials had been used to make them, before completing an evaluation sheet on their individual toy.

82. The subject is well co-ordinated and the curriculum complies with national requirements. A sound subject policy and a national scheme of work are fully in place. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The assessment process is sound and it is used well by class teachers in forward planning. The monitoring of

teaching by the subject co-ordinator has taken place but this is not yet an established and regular occurrence. Pupils' work is monitored and photographic evidence is now being kept. Resources are adequate, however the support of the curriculum by the use of information technology is limited.

GEOGRAPHY

83. It was only possible to see one geography lesson during the course of the inspection. Judgements, therefore, are also based on an analysis of previous work, examination of documentation and discussions with staff and pupils. These indicate that standards are broadly in line with the national expectation at the end of both key stages, a finding similar to that of the last inspection. Key Stage 1 pupils are able to use a key to identify features on a map. They can also successfully compare and contrast various aspects of their local area with those of a remote Scottish island. Younger Key Stage 2 pupils have an appropriate understanding of climatic and physical attributes of a region of India that they are studying. Average and higher attaining pupils successfully compare aspects of the Indian climate and terrain with that of the United Kingdom. They are aware that there are variations within and between regions. Older pupils at this key stage have a sound understanding of river processes such as erosion, and transportation and deposition of silt. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of a wide range of aspects of Kenya and have a well-developed geographical vocabulary. No judgement is possible regarding the progress of pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.

84. In the one lesson inspected, pupils were very interested in the topic. They were very attentive during the preliminary discussion and contributed to this with marked enthusiasm. Their behaviour was very good. The teaching was good. Challenging open-ended questions extended pupils' geographical skills and knowledge. Planning was detailed and had due regard for the needs of different groups of pupils within the class – including the more able. Methods were varied, which helped maintain pupils' interest, while discipline was secure.

85. There are appropriate policies and planning structures in place for geography, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has particular expertise in the subject and a clear view of where it needs to be further developed.

HISTORY

86. Standards in history broadly meet the national expectation. This finding is similar to that of the last inspection. Young Key Stage 1 pupils are mostly able to identify a number of reasons for categorising teddy bears and other toys according to their age. They are aware of a variety of signs as to why a toy might be old. Pupils at the end of the key stage have a good understanding and recall of several significant episodes in British history, such as the events surrounding Guy Fawkes' plot to destroy parliament, and the Great Fire of London. They successfully use a picture of a Victorian street scene to identify particular aspects of that period. Younger Key Stage 2 pupils successfully compare a Victorian classroom with a modern one. They recognise that old photographs are a useful form of historical evidence. Pupils at the end of the key stage have a good understanding of Britain since 1930. Many have a strong sense of empathy with members of the post war immigrant population and the problems these had to face. They effectively use census information to find out about the past. Only a minority of the current Year 6 pupils, however, are clear about when the Victorian period was, and they have a very simplistic view of the era.

87. Pupils' attitudes towards history lessons are mostly satisfactory and sometimes good. Key Stage 1 pupils enjoy exploring artefacts. They concentrate well during discussions, and are keen to share their ideas with the rest of their class. Some older pupils, however, are noisy in history lessons and inclined to call out inappropriately. They are also slow to settle to research tasks. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and sometimes it is good. Resources are used to good effect to stimulate pupils' interest and questions challenge their thinking. Discipline is mostly effective. Occasionally an activity provided for pupils is low level and inhibits their pace of learning.

88. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic about the subject and has a clear view of its future needs. She appropriately monitors planning and assessment records. Good use is made of visitors to the school who share their experiences from the past. Some out of school visits to museums and other relevant places of interest take place from time to time. The school suitably plans to develop such activities further in the future.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

89. Pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages is below national expectations and is below the standard recorded at the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils understand that a variety of information can be entered and stored on the computer. They can enter text, using the shift key to produce capital letters and the backspace to make corrections, and use an art programme to produce simple designs. Pupils in Reception, for example design the buses they produce during design and technology. Pupils understand that information technology can be used to control movement. They can plan simple routes and programme a floor turtle to execute these. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson pupils use this skill satisfactorily to estimate distances travelled by the turtle on various straight routes. Pupils understand that situations can be practised and explored during simulations. They practise in Year 1, for example how to dress a teddy in the correct order and most pupils show sound mouse control during this lesson. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils can use a variety of fonts and sizes of fonts in the presentation of their texts and can combine simple text with pictures, as for example in the presentation of Christmas cards. They can save and print out their work. Pupils understand that information can be stored in a database and Year 3 pupils used this effectively during mathematics week to store information related to physical education. They can use appropriate software to present data in bar charts and pie charts and use a limited selection of CD ROMS to access information in other areas of the curriculum, for example, history and science. The pupils' skills, however are not well established and during most lessons observed many pupils needed adult support. The opening of the computer suite last year is already having a positive impact on standards.

90. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and sound and sometimes better in Key Stage 2. Teachers plan lessons well and explain tasks clearly and precisely so that maximum timetabled time is spent "hands on". Teachers of the younger pupils use effective methods to when introducing a topic to their pupils. In Year 1, the teacher asks a small number of pupil to try to dress a teddy bear, highlighting the time and effort it takes, before introducing to the pupils a programme that simulated this. In Year 2, the teacher uses some examples of handwritten text, which included errors and crossing out, to remind pupils about the techniques they can employ when word-processing. The present performance and skill levels of some pupils are addressed well by teachers, so that individual pupils' tasks are appropriate and instructions given in short bursts, as in classes where there are a number of pupils with special educational needs, for example, or where pupils have slow keyboard skills. However the needs of the more able pupils or those with further advanced skills are not as well addressed. Pupils are most highly motivated in lessons where they need to acquire or practise a skill for a particular purpose. In Year 4, pupils work hard in order to change fonts and sizes of fonts in order to emphasize the most important rules on their list of class rules. In Year 5 pupils practise the same skills, but this time in order to use them to produce a class joke book. Pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject and they are encouraged to use equipment with care.

91. The information technology curriculum is broad and balanced and based on a national scheme. The subject is well led and the co-ordinator has been effective in raising the level of expertise of class teachers where necessary by team teaching and running Wednesday evening support sessions for them. There are satisfactory assessment procedures in place, but these do not involve pupils in the progression of their skills. Samples of pupils' work are kept but these do not refer to national curriculum levels. Support staff are well deployed and effective in providing one to one support of the pupils. A governor and the school caretaker who both have skills in the area of information technology provide good support to the school. Resources have very recently been improved, and there is now a well-equipped information and communications technology area. The development of information technology to support other curriculum areas has already started and the stock of relevant software is being built up.

MUSIC

92. The attainment of pupils at the end of both key stages is broadly in line with national expectations and the progress of pupils across both key stages is sound. By the end of the Key Stage 1, pupils sing in tune and have a sound awareness of pulse. They perform together satisfactorily in assemblies and lessons, accompanying themselves with actions, as in the Year 2 lesson where pupils used different body parts effectively to represent rain and thunder. Throughout the key stage pupils increase their knowledge and use of musical terms and, by the end of Year 2, pupils know the names of a variety of simple instruments and appreciate that music can be controlled by simple symbols. In Key Stage 2, pupils satisfactorily learn to sing more difficult songs and many pupils show real enjoyment when performing them in a large group, as in the

assembly where pupils sing "He's Got The Whole World In His Hands". Pupils gain a sound knowledge of a variety of different musical styles and appreciate that music can be used to represent a wide variety of things. In Year 3, for example, pupils successfully match some animals to pieces of music when listening to "The Carnival Of The Animals" but are unable to match others, for example, the swan. Pupils have a sound awareness of music from a limited number of cultures, through organised workshops as well as lessons. Pupils in Years 2, 4 and 5, for example have attended a music and dance workshop based around the African Caribbean culture. Pupils in the latter half of Key Stage 2 have an appropriate and developing understanding of musical notation. Pupils' listening skills and their knowledge of music and its composers are effectively enhanced by music played during their entry and exit to assembly each day. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress relative to their individual abilities and are well-integrated into classes.

93. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory, sometimes very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is sound and in the latter half of Key Stage 2 it is very good, enabling these older pupils to benefit from the teaching of practicing musicians. Teachers' planning is clear as are their explanations of appropriate tasks. Some teachers satisfactorily use the purchased scheme, with which they are familiar to support the national scheme, which is newly in place. Relationships in the classroom are good and ensure that teachers' questioning of the pupils and constructive comments are readily accepted by the pupils enabling them to improve the quality of their own performance. There is a good balance of teacher exposition / questioning and pupil activity. Support assistants are deployed well when they are available and their encouragement and firm guidance helps to keep the concentration of potentially challenging pupils focused when working at demanding tasks in small groups. A good example of this was seen in Year 5 when pairs of pupils were composing short pieces of music which they then interpreted using percussion instruments and played successfully to the rest of the class. Teachers respond to pupils needs well during lessons and this sometimes means adjusting the lesson plan to simplify the lesson or as in Year 6 to extend the structure of the lesson to make it more complex when the pupils were doing well. These older pupils responded well to the extra demands of this lesson and the whole class including the teacher showed real pleasure at the end. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection.

94. The curriculum is broad and suitably balanced and the national scheme has just been established. The school curriculum is well supported by outside events like the project with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the school works on combined events with other local primary schools. Music performances are given by a wide range of pupils and include a Christmas performance. Pupils regularly visit a local old people's home and the local library to perform. All these activities enhance the music provision and contribute well towards the pupils' musical development, maintaining the sound standards noted in the previous inspection.

95. The subject lacked a co-ordinator last year but the new co-ordinator has already taken positive action to raise the profile of the subject. A well-attended recorder club has been established, for example. The co-ordinator has not yet had time to develop her monitoring role. Satisfactory assessment procedures are now in place and these have been developed since the last inspection. Resources have been audited recently, supplemented and are adequate, however the use of information technology to support learning is underdeveloped.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

96. The standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are in line with those expected for pupils of these ages. Standards are very similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. The achievements of pupils are satisfactory in relation to their previous learning.

97. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils show suitable control and agility in their running. Pupils in Year 2 change direction and speed with ease, start and stop quickly and move with appropriate pace and balance. They move in other ways with equal control, such as when they hop, jump and skip in lessons and at play times. Pupils devise interesting ways of moving, varying level, speed and shape and they match their movements and expressions well to the 'mood' suggested by the teacher.

98. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have further developed the control, fluency and agility in their movement and have developed their knowledge, understanding and skills in games to a satisfactory level for their age. In hockey, for example, the pupils hold the stick properly when making mainly accurately passes, control the ball well when they receive a pass and adjust their position quickly when receiving an inaccurate pass. In gymnastics, pupils develop suitably creative sequences of movement with a partner. They demonstrate

satisfactory levels of balance and control when performing counter balances and mirror image movements, but do not give sufficient attention to performing with body tension, extension and smart start/finish positions.

99. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. Teachers know what they want the pupils to learn in each lesson, and by sharing this with the pupils, motivate them well to learn what is planned. Teachers use a good range of teaching techniques, including explaining, demonstration and questioning, and this enables the pupils to know what is expected of them. Expectations of work and behaviour are high, and a very large majority of pupils respond well, with interest, enthusiasm and perseverance. Whilst the pace of learning in most lessons is suitably brisk, in a few Key Stage 2 lessons, insufficient work is done because teachers have to continually stop the lesson to deal with the inattention of a few pupils, mainly boys. Learning is also adversely affected when the teacher organises the pupils in such a way that requires only a very few to be active, whilst the others wait for their turn.

100. The school provides a suitably balanced and broad curriculum during lessons. The school has very recently adopted the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority Scheme of Work in an effort to ensure that the pupils build progressively on their previous learning and skills as they move through the school. Little formal assessment is currently undertaken, except in swimming. The school provides only a limited range of extra-curricular activities, a concern expressed by parents. The subject benefits from management by a subject specialist who has been in post for only a few months. A satisfactory start has been made in managing the resources for the subject and in introducing the new curriculum. Monitoring and evaluating teaching and standards in the subject has not taken place because physical education has not been a priority subject for the school over the last four years, partly due to major developments in the provision for literacy and numeracy.

101. There has been satisfactory improvement in the subject since the last inspection, mainly in its co-ordination and the provision of a clear scheme of work.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

102. Religious education now has an established place in the school's curriculum and issues raised in the last report have been fully addressed. Current work at both key stages relates fully to the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education and planning is further supported by the use of nationally produced materials.

103. Standards in religious education are, therefore, now broadly as expected at the end of both key stages. Key Stage 1 pupils think deeply when considering their appreciation for God's gifts to us. Others have a growing awareness of the significance of religious symbols to believers. They have a good understanding of a range of religious stories from Christianity and other major world religions. Key Stage 2 pupils have a sound appreciation of key features of several religions. They are able, for example, to conceptualise about miracles and the significance of these within Christianity. They also understand the importance of prayer to believers.

104. Pupils' attitudes in religious education lessons are mostly good. They are interested in the topics and generally keen to contribute sensibly to discussions. Most settle well to follow-up tasks. Some pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, however, are noisy and disinclined to listen to the views of others. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and is mostly good. Pupils are frequently presented with challenging concepts, which successfully extend their religious thinking. The good use of resources helps maintain interest, while methods have suitable variety and support the pace of pupils' learning. Discipline is positive and mostly successful. Occasionally a low-key activity during a lesson has an adverse effect on pupils' learning.

105. Appropriate arrangements are in place for assessing and recording pupils' achievements in religious education. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the subject's future needs and a firm determination to improve provision yet further.