

INSPECTION REPORT

TOPCLIFFE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Castle Vale, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103307

Headteacher: Mrs Lauren Gibbons

Acting headteacher at the time of the inspection:
Mr Chris Robinson

Reporting inspector: George Wallace
Ofsted reference number: 10010

Dates of inspection: 18th –21st February 2002

Inspection number: 230839

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Girls and boys
School address:	Hawkinge Drive Castle Vale Birmingham
Postcode:	B35 6BS
Telephone number:	0121 747 6296
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sheila Shepherd
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
George Wallace 10010	Registered inspector	Geography Physical education Equal opportunities	What kind of school is it? The school's results and achievements What should the school do to improve further?
Catherine Hinds 10173	Lay inspector	-	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Joyce Cox 25074	Team inspector	English Foundation Stage Speech and Language Unit	
Rob Isaac 23080	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music Religious education	Staffing, accommodation and resources issues
Paul Cunningham 19314	Team inspector	Mathematics History Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
David Shepherd 2905	Team inspector	Science Art Design and technology	How well are the pupils taught?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Topcliffe Primary is a popular school situated on a large council estate on the north side of Birmingham, bordered on all sides by main roads, which make the estate very insular. The estate was originally built in the 1960s and had row upon row of tower blocks. However, since the last inspection in December 1997, almost all of the tower blocks have been demolished and replaced with upgraded housing. A Housing Action Trust is responsible for the housing and a number of community projects.

Topcliffe is a two-form entry primary school, with a current roll of 363 children aged 4 to 11 years. Nearly half are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. Although many of the children attend nursery before starting school and some children come into school with sound social skills, the overall level of literacy is poor. Less than 2 per cent of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. There are four children in the school's Speech and Language Unit who, for nearly three-quarters of their time, work with other pupils in the main school. Nearly a quarter of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and the proportion of these with Statements of Special Educational Need is above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school and, although not a church school, is one strongly based on Christian values. The staff and all connected with the school have very successfully created a highly caring and supportive place in which pupils love to learn. They are cherished and nurtured and make good progress as they grow from very young children to extremely pleasant thoughtful pupils at the age of 11 years. Pupils love their school and very much enjoy coming to school. There is a rich and broad curriculum and staff work hard to involve parents and the wider community in the life of the school. Pupils mostly experience education of a high quality and this is reflected in the trend of improving standards each year even though the 2001 test results were below average in English, mathematics and science¹. Achievement by pupils is above average. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 in science, art and history.
- Above average levels of achievement reached by all pupils as they move from reception to Year 6.
- Personal development of pupils, especially their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Develops strong and keen attitudes to learning together with excellent behaviour and personal development.
- Good quality teaching, some of which was excellent.
- The provision for children in the Foundation Stage.
- Breadth, variety and richness of the curriculum, especially that outside the National Curriculum.
- Caring for pupils' welfare and development.
- Linking and communicating with parents, together with parents' views of the school.
- Strong leadership.
- Provides high quality accommodation and excellent learning resources.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, especially writing, and in music, geography, design and technology and religious education.
- Governors' involvement in all aspects of the monitoring and development of key features of the school.
- The management of curriculum development and provision through the expertise of curriculum co-ordinators.
- Tracking of pupils' attainment and achievements at a senior level as well as by teachers.
- Attendance.

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

¹ Standards in mathematics at Key Stage 1, however, were well above average in 2001.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Both key issues arising from the last inspection have been worked on, but significant improvements have only occurred in information technology. Pupils who are 11 are now reaching standards expected for their age, but standards in design and technology remain below average. However, in the four years following the last inspection, standards in English, mathematics and science rose. The average trend showing improvements in these subjects is above the national average, but the standards in the 2001 tests for 11-year-old pupils dropped dramatically. A significant reason, not picked up by the school in its analysis of standards, was the very large change in composition of pupils since this year group took the national tests at the age of 7 in 1997. Over a third of those who joined were pupils on the school register of special educational needs and several higher achieving pupils left the area. The mathematics tests taken by 7-year-old pupils in 2001 showed continued improvements, but in reading and writing standards are below average. Attendance has improved since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores² in National Curriculum tests.

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

National tests results for 11-year-old pupils in 2001 show that standards in English and mathematics are well below the national average when compared with all junior and primary schools in England. This is a dramatic fall from the previous year. However, when results are compared with pupils in schools similar to Topcliffe School, while standards in English are below average, those in mathematics are average and in science they are well above average.

While the quality of pupils' reading has been below average when compared with all 7-year-old children in England, the school has been very effective in raising standards to well above average for schools similar to Topcliffe. Writing standards are also well below average, but again the effectiveness of the teaching in the recent past has produced average standards when compared with similar schools. Mathematics results have been so good that standards are high and in the top 25 per cent of schools in England. When the results of the higher attaining pupils are compared with similar schools, Topcliffe pupils are amongst the top 5 per cent of pupils achieving National Curriculum Level 5 or above.

The school targets in English and mathematics were exceeded significantly in 1999 and 2000, but missed by an extremely large margin in 2001. The targets in 2001 were far too high and those for 2002 are also unrealistically high.

Inspectors' findings show pupils' standards in Year 6 to be above average in science, art and history, average in mathematics, information and communication technology, physical education, and below expected levels for 11-year-old pupils in English, design and technology, geography, music and religious education. However, when the standards of pupils are taken into account when they start school they show that pupils have made good progress in most subjects and very good progress in

² The average points score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school. At Key Stages 1 and 2 the Level attained by each pupil, for example, in mathematics, is given a score. A Level 1 = 9 points, a Level 2 = 15 points and so on. Therefore the average points score in mathematics is worked out by adding up all of the points based on the Level attained by pupils and then dividing by the number of pupils who took the test. Therefore, a school whose average points score for mathematics in the end of Key Stage 1 tests is greater than 15.0 is one whose pupils are performing above that expected for their age. The average points score for Level 4, the nationally expected level for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 is 27.

science, art and history to achieve the standards reached. Year 6 pupils' achievements in the recent past have been exceptionally good. End of Year 2 test results in 2001 showed standards below average in reading, well below average in writing and well above average in mathematics. However, inspection findings in Years 1 and 2 show that pupils standards in mathematics are currently below average, but good teaching helps to ensure satisfactory, and for some pupils good, progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils want to work and as they get older they become more independent and inclined to show more and more curiosity for learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils' behaviour in corridors, assemblies, classrooms and the playgrounds is exemplary.
Personal development and relationships	Outstanding.
Attendance	Below average and disappointing for the school bearing in mind the efforts made by the school to raise attendance levels. They have, however, improved since the last inspection. Too many pupils arrive late.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Very 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.

Overall, teaching is very good and a real strength of the school. Three-quarters of lessons were good and many contained both very good and sometimes outstanding features. Other lessons were satisfactory and only one was unsatisfactory.

Teaching in the reception classes is always good. Teachers have a thorough understanding of the curriculum for children under five and, therefore, show good planning and very effective ways of teaching to ensure that children benefit from their time in the reception classes.

In Years 1 and 2, teaching overall is good, but with much variation between unsatisfactory and very good teaching. Teachers' knowledge is good and their relationships with pupils are very good. In several lessons planning is insufficiently thorough especially in terms of showing the purpose of the tasks pupils are about to do. This produces satisfactory lessons, but the pace is frequently too slow.

The overall quality of teaching of 7 to 11-year-old pupils is very good with the older pupils experiencing very good teaching and sometimes quite outstanding teaching. In these lessons teachers may organise as many as five sub-groups of pupils working on different tasks all very well matched to their needs and providing pupils with a high level of challenge. Equally, there are examples of very good whole class teaching. However, there are variations in the overall quality between classes so that improvements could occur, for example, in planning, providing sufficient challenge to different groups of pupils and tracking attainment.

The attitude of pupils to their learning is nearly always very good and strongest in the upper parts of the school. Pupils are good listeners and co-operate and collaborate extremely well with other children, teachers and other adults in the classroom. All pupils are highly valued at school and are included in everything. Those with special educational needs³ work extremely well. In most classes the work is matched closely to their needs and additional support is of good quality.

³ The special educational needs co-ordinator is on long term illness and the school has not yet managed to provide a temporary replacement to provide specialist support.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very good range of learning opportunities. Extra-curricular activities in and beyond school are excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. This is because teachers largely plan effectively to match work to pupils' needs. However, some aspects of the provision are beginning to be neglected due to the long-term illness of the special educational needs co-ordinator because there is no temporary replacement. The work of the teacher and classroom support assistant in the Speech and Language Unit is good and effective, but in view of there having been no speech therapist available for over a year the overall effectiveness of the unit is unsatisfactory. ⁴
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is a very strong feature of the work of the school. The way in which the school provides for pupils' moral and social development is superb. Situations to develop pupils' spiritual feelings are very good and the cultural aspects of the school are also strong.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Highly, but in different ways. The school takes very good care of its pupils; they are happy and feel well supported. However, the care taken over the quality of learning varies between classes from excellent to satisfactory.

The school reaches out in a very wide range of ways to work effectively with parents. Communication with parents is strong and teachers make themselves available to talk with parents on a daily basis.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Strong leadership. The head has a clear vision for the school and this is shared by the acting headteacher. ⁵ The school, therefore, continues to experience strong leadership and shared values and beliefs. There are, and have been for some time, weaknesses in some aspects of management, including financial systems. For example, the way curriculum co-ordinators' are unable to monitor their subject and in particular influence its development across the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	This is poor because, while the governors are extremely supportive of the school, they do not act as a critical friend. There is also insufficient monitoring of the school's finances or provision of any leads for the future development of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. The school has taken understandable pride in the standards reached by pupils in English, mathematics and science in recent years. However, the systems to track pupils' progress in most subjects, use of data to determine targets for pupils and the general evaluation of the quality of what is provided for pupils against their attainment and achievement is unsatisfactory.
The strategic use of resources	Good, but there is a lack of attention to the impact of the use of some resources on pupils' learning and the influence some staff have on improving the standards in their curriculum area.

The loyalty and commitment of staff to the school and its children are very high. The accommodation is of a high standard and extremely well cared for. Outside areas except the main playgrounds, which are satisfactory, are varied, valuable and provide pupils with activities and interesting experiences.

⁴ It is the responsibility of the Area Health Authority to provide a speech and language therapist and not the school.

⁵ The headteacher is on long term leave due to ill health. At the time of the inspection there is no indication of a time when she will return to school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Six parents attended the parents' meeting and 65 questionnaires were returned.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That children love their school.• That the school works closely with them.• They feel able to approach staff.• That they are well informed about their children's performance.• That the school has a lovely feel and ethos to it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nothing – very happy parents.

Parents are very pleased with the school and the only areas of comment includes the fact that girls should have the option to wear either trousers or skirts and there was a desire from some of the parents at the meeting to set up a parent teacher association. The team agrees with parents in all areas of their commentary.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Years 3 to 6

- The following table summarises the standards reached by pupils who were in Year 6 last summer, and those who are in Year 6 now.

Subject	Standards 2001 national tests		Standards 2002 inspection findings	Notes
	Compared with all schools in England	Compared with schools similar to Topcliffe only		
English	Well below average	Below average	Below average	While results are below average, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 ⁶ is well above average. In 2001, girls' performance in English dropped much more sharply from the previous year than that of boys.
Mathematics	Well below average	Average	Average	Pupils are on course to reach expected levels of attainment.
Science	Average	Well above average	Above average	Results are in the top 25 per cent of schools similar to Topcliffe School.
Subject	Standards At the last inspection	Standards 2002 inspection findings	Notes	
Art	Above expectations	Above expectations	Very good art displays around the school showing a wide range of good quality two and three-dimensional art.	
Design and technology	Below expectations	Below expectations	No lessons taught hence no direct evidence or information from pupils to form a judgement other than below average. The school has not been teaching to the National Curriculum.	
Geography	Average	Below expectations	Pupils know places in UK and some key places world wide. The breadth of study is too narrow too allow pupils to reach expected standards.	

⁶ ON LEVELS: The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils are, by the age 7, expected to reach Level 2. If a pupil is attaining Level 3 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a child of his or her age. When pupils are age 11, they are expected to reach Level 4. Therefore, if a pupil is attaining Level 5 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a child of his or her age.

History	Above expectations	Above expectations	There is good progress from Year 1 to year 6. Teachers' enthusiasm and clarity of teaching promotes interest and above average standards. This was revealed particularly in a lesson about health and hygiene in Victorian times.
ICT ⁷	Below average	At levels expected for pupils of their age	Clarity of teaching and high quality resources meant that pupils' attainment has improved since the last inspection. They recognise a database, use a search engine and can extract information from one source and paste into a presentation package.
Music	Average	Below expectations	Standards achieved by about 100 pupils are above average because they take the many opportunities to learn instruments. For example, the violin, clarinet, keyboards, flute, recorder and percussion. Many pupils are also involved in the school choir. However, for most pupils, bar Year 4, there is too little time made for teaching music and this is a factor leading to the low standards.
Physical education	Above average	At levels expected for pupils of their age	Pupils are enthusiastic. Close attention to their teachers ensures they make good progress in lessons.
Religious education	Average	Below expectations	Too little time is devoted to religious education to make an impact on raising standards. Pupils, however, develop a good understanding of aspects of Christianity.

2. In 2001 the end of Year 6 national test results fell significantly in both English and mathematics after a period of significant and above national average improvement year on year since the last inspection. The performance of girls and boys is similar and until 2001 was close to the national average. In science, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 or above remained similar to the 2000 test and was marginally above the national average. However, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above in science was above average, placing Topcliffe in the top 40 per cent of schools in England. The attainment of both boys and girls is, therefore, well above the national average.
3. On the basis of the 2001 Year 6 group of pupils, the school set its targets too high. The ambition was to continue the very positive upward trend, started in 1998, in all three core subjects. The current targets are also too high (70 per cent of pupils reaching Level 4 or above for English and 75 per cent for mathematics).
4. The main reason for the down turn in the school's results was the fact that over one third of the pupils who took the test were new to the school since Year 3 and nearly all of the new pupils in Year 6 last year were on the register for special educational needs. In addition, the Year 2 national test results in English (reading and writing) in 1997 were below average, but close to the average in mathematics. The improvement in standards in information and communication technology since the last inspection is down to the enormous improvement in resources and improved skills of teachers. This has led to a greater frequency with which pupils are using information and communication technology, both in the learning of the skills themselves and through learning in other subjects such as mathematics.. Conversely, the decline in standards in subjects such as geography, music and religious education are much more to do with the lack of time given to the teaching of these subjects rather than anything to do with the quality of teaching.
5. In all subjects, bar design and technology, geography, music and religious education, pupils are making good progress, even though the standards in several subjects by the time pupils leave school are lower than expected. The richness of the curriculum ensures that the gifted and talented pupils receive a wealth of opportunities to extend their

⁷ ICT stands for information and communication technology.

knowledge, understanding and skills helping to ensure that their learning is effective and progress is very good. The programme for the least able is also very good, but this programme has been interrupted by the unfortunate long term illness of the special educational needs co-ordinator who has not yet been replaced by a temporary appointment. The school has an above average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs. The provision made for them is good throughout the school. Teachers know their pupils well and carefully plan to meet their personal needs. Assistants, who focus on the work of the pupils concerned, ably support them and together with teachers' support pupils make good progress.

Reception

6. Children join the reception class with well below average social skills and skills of literacy. Their year in this class makes a significant difference to them. They enjoy their learning, make significant improvements in most of the areas of knowledge and skills expected of young children while in a reception class and, therefore, their achievements are high. By the time they enter Year 1 many of the children have reached levels of attainment expected for their age in their creative and physical development. However, their communication, language and literacy skills, although much improved, remain well below the level expected for children aged four to five.

Year 1-2

7. The following table summarises the standards reached by pupils who were in Year 2 last summer and those who are in Year 3 now.

Subject	Standards 2001 national tests		Standards 2002 inspection findings	Notes
	Compared with all schools in England	Compared with schools similar to Topcliffe only		
Reading	Below average	Well above average	Below average	Over recent years there has been steady improvement in reading and strong improvement in mathematics; therefore, in relation to similar schools the impact of the early years teaching on raising standards has been high. Standards in mathematics during the inspection, however, were below average. Standards in writing are very low with no pupils reaching Level 3; however, progress is still being made. When compared with similar schools the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels is well above average and in both reading and mathematics in the top 5 per cent of similar schools.
Writing	Well below average	Average	Well below average	
Mathematics	Well above average	Very high	Well above average	

Subject	Standards at the last inspection	Standards 2002 inspection findings	Notes
Art	Average	Average	Pupils are good at using a variety of materials to create a seaside collage. Teachers talking with individual pupils allows pupils to think and improve their work. Learning is of a good quality.
Design and technology	Below expectations	Below expectations	No lessons taught hence no direct evidence or information from pupils. The school has not been teaching to the National Curriculum, but plans and some displays indicate that there has been an improvement since the last inspection.
Geography	Average	Below expectations	Pupils know places in UK, but little else has been taught to them.
History	Above average	At levels expected for pupils of their age	Pupils recognise differences between activities now and, for example, 100 years ago and give good reasons. They recognise differences and similarities between, for example, seaside activities now and in the past. Pupils' interest leads to good learning in history.
ICT	Below expectations	Below expectations	Pupils show that they can log on and off a computer, use a mouse and write sentences.
Music	Average	Below expectations	When given the opportunity, pupils enjoy music. They listen intently. They take care of the instruments, but the lack of time devoted to music has caused standards for the majority of pupils to fall. They also work well with each other and standards are satisfactory for those learning instruments or singing in the school choir.
Physical education	Average	At levels expected for pupils of their age	For example, pupils show they can hold, pass and control a ball at a level expected for their age.
Religious education	Average	Below expectations	Too little time is devoted to religious education and, therefore, progress is slower than expected. However, the school's provision for religious education and spiritual development is linked closely to 'candle time' and the way many teachers and pupils show a quiet respect for each other.

8. In all subjects the standards reached by boys and girls are similar. In reading and mathematics, in particular, the school has ensured that pupils have year on year improved their standards and the gap between boys and girls has narrowed and the difference is not significant. Improvements have been so much in national test results that standards in mathematics show that the school is in the top 25 per cent of schools in England. However, when compared with other schools that are similar in character to Topcliffe, the mathematics results reveal that the school is in the top 5 per cent.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils have very good attitudes. This is a distinct feature of the school which has improved since the previous inspection. Parents report that their children are keen to come to school; a view confirmed by the inspection team during their time in school. Pupils' happy faces as they join classmates in the playground before the morning bell reflect their pleasure in their life at school. They say they love their school and relish the

huge range of activities open to them. The Green Club is a particular favourite. Seventy-five pupils signed up to join and enjoy caring for many aspects of the school environment. Members helped in the construction of a garden shed and during the inspection week enjoyed getting their hands filthy when preparing the soil for planting from their seed trays. Another group meanwhile eagerly searched the Internet for a company that recycles plastics. Yet a third group collected waste paper from classroom containers and braved the wind and rain to remove it to the store in the playground.

10. The attitudes of pupils, including those with special education needs, to their learning are equally good and make significant contribution to the progress pupils make. During lessons, pupils are confident, join in all the activities with enthusiasm and work hard. Boys and girls longed to contribute their ideas in a Year 5 English lesson where the class was discussing writing a factual report about Topcliffe School.
11. Another improvement since the previous inspection is the exceptionally good behaviour of the pupils. This is now exemplary and reflects the outstanding care taken by all staff to promote good behaviour throughout the school. In lessons, pupils respond to the very clear expectations of the teacher. This response stimulates their desire to do their best and leaves no time for inappropriate behaviour. In the playground, behaviour is also excellent. Pupils play well together with evident enjoyment and vigour. They are kind to one another and are careful to not just notice but also accommodate the needs of others as they move around the school. Pupils are exceptionally careful with property, treating their own and the school's equipment with very high levels of respect. Displays are wonderful throughout the school. Pupils delight in their originality and interest without ever interfering with or damaging a single item.
12. There have been no permanent exclusions from the school. Reports from pupils and parents indicate that bullying rarely occurs and, if it does, staff handle such incidents exceptionally well.
13. Relationships in the school are also excellent and this is yet another improvement since the previous inspection. All pupils, boys and girls, younger and older, enjoy being with one another whether in the classrooms or around the school. They offer each other very good support in lessons and automatically and modestly help each other. Offering a helping hand comes naturally to these pupils. A young pupil noticed her neighbour struggling to tie her apron and immediately shared her own recently acquired dexterity.
14. A significant feature of these outstanding relationships is the natural ease with which all pupils are included in school life. Those pupils who have special education needs are totally involved with their friends in work and leisure activities. No one is left out of the clubs and activities or the fun in the playground. If pupils have to stay inside because of particular medical concerns, then classmates stay and keep them company and entertained.
15. The school is an extremely harmonious community where pupils relate equally well with adults. The pupils are charming citizens who are always eager to share a smile, a word or a story with an adult. Shared humour is evident in many of the interactions between pupils and adults. This community has fun together, even including tender laughter during a prayer in a whole school assembly. The pupils loved the thought of God being cross with the headteacher. Pupils value the feelings and experiences of others. They listen attentively when teachers share stories about their own particular circumstances. They show high levels of interest in, and compassion for, the lives and needs of others. Each class is currently collecting money for a Count Your Blessings Box made by the Year 6 pupils for Lent. Rapid mental calculations followed the request that pupils bring 1p for every tap they have in their home. This ensures that in whatever way possible, pupils and

parents are involved in thinking about others because all over the world there are people who do not have enough or easy access to water.

16. The school acknowledges the importance of each pupil's personality and ensures that each makes very good gains in their personal development. This represents another improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils, including those who have additional challenges due to their special education needs, take very good levels of responsibility for their busy lives in school. Many pack a lot into their busy week and they manage to have the correct equipment to hand. They take great care about hanging up their coats and make sure they have their books and pens and pencils ready to start their lessons. They take real ownership of any jobs they are given or volunteer for. The School Council has its own budget and Year 6 members are very careful about how this is used and accounted for. House captains eagerly collect house points at the end of the week hoping for success in collecting the house cup and the chance to display their coloured ribbons. From an early age pupils are expected, and many offer, to carry messages to others or do jobs to help keep the classrooms, corridors and grounds in good order. The enthusiastic gardener supplies a regular flow of willing youngsters with weeding and tidying tasks. Pupils glow with pride when chosen to help out. They are thrilled, for instance, to participate in assemblies. For example, it was a joy to see expressions of extremely good natured horror on the faces of the children as a few chosen pupils realised they were to be chickens, sheep or goats in the assembly.
17. Overall attendance is below the national average, however, at first sight figures appear to be well below average. These figures are adversely affected by the regular very late arrival of a few, but nevertheless significant, number of pupils. The school is aware that these pupils are in school, but since the register closes at 09.30 it has to record absence marks in the computer. The school nevertheless still has too many parents who do not ensure that their children attend school every day. As at the time of the previous inspection a significant number of pupils arrive late at the start of the school day. Authorised absence is just above the national average and unauthorised absence is the same as the national average. Attendance has improved since the time of the last inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. It is the major factor that ensures most pupils make good progress during their time at the school. The high standards in the teaching recorded at the last inspection have been maintained. The teaching is mostly good throughout the school and, for example, in the reception classes it is consistently good. The best teaching is in Years 5 and 6 and in one of the Year 4 and Year 2 classes where the teaching in over three-quarters of lessons was found to be very good, and some of it outstanding. However, the teaching in a few classes does not always reach these high standards because it was much more variable ranging from unsatisfactory, albeit one lesson, to very good.
19. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and very good progress in Years 3 to 6. Able pupils generally make good progress throughout the school, especially in Years 3 to 6. Minority ethnic pupils and the pupil with English as an additional language are also taught well and they make good progress. The teaching challenges boys and girls equally and both make good progress. Classroom support assistants, who focus on the work of the pupils concerned, ably support them. The pupils are fully involved and they enjoy their work. The teachers intervene regularly to praise the pupils, support them and monitor their progress. Classroom support assistants are identified in the teachers' planning and there is clear focus on what support these assistants are to offer. They support pupils in areas that have been identified in pupils' individual education plans. They communicate with the teacher daily and have a verbal

input into any reports that are written. The quality of support is good and the level of support given to a pupil or a class varies according to the needs of that pupil/class.

20. There are a number of features of the most successful teaching. The most significant of these is the positive way in which teachers establish the good behaviour of pupils. All teachers expect pupils to behave well in lessons, walk sensibly and quietly around school and play together in the playground. Nearly all pupils respond positively to their teachers' high expectations of them and listen attentively in the majority of lessons, walk quietly to assembly and physical education lessons and co-operate with each other during their break times. A second significant feature of the good teaching is the way most teachers plan their lessons. Nearly all lessons are planned well and it is clear to pupils what the purpose of the lesson is about. In the best lessons, these are discussed with the pupils at the beginning, referred to at times during and followed up at the end of lessons to let pupils see how much they have really learned. This maintains the focus on learning throughout lessons. For example, this occurred during a mathematics lesson in Year 6 where lower attaining pupils were learning about odd and even numbers. The teacher constantly reminded the pupils how they were achieving the objective of the lesson by developing their mathematical thinking in solving number problems. This objective was told to the pupils at the beginning and reviewed at the end of the lesson. Teachers' plans also include activities for the highest attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. This occurred in a science lesson on condensation, melting and freezing in Year 6. Higher attaining pupils were expected to use their initiative and label their diagram using scientific terms such as evaporation, condensation and melting. Lower attaining pupils, on the other hand, discussed their diagrams with their teachers and classroom support assistant before labelling their work.
21. In the most effective lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge. They have good subject knowledge in literacy and numeracy and these subjects are generally taught well. Some teachers have good expertise in science, information and communication technology and personal and social education. High levels of subject expertise allow teachers to plan a variety of different tasks for pupils of different abilities in their class. This is very efficiently done and shows that teachers know the strengths and areas and areas for improvement of their pupils. Such expertise and good planning ensures that classwork is matched to pupils' needs and therefore, for example, provides good challenges for the most able pupils. Pupils respond positively to this expertise and sometimes ask teachers questions that require high levels of subject knowledge in order to clarify their own understanding and thinking. This helps pupils of all abilities learn effectively. The good subject expertise, the use of very good resources together with very good mannerisms including variations in the use of one's voice are examples of ways that teachers lock pupils' interest in their class work and show that they have a strong desire to learn. The way some classes combine in year groups for some lessons ensures that pupils receive their teaching from teachers with the most expertise. This occurs in subjects such as science and art in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. Classes are taught together for the initial input before returning to their class base to carry out activities set. A similar arrangement occurs for physical education and handwriting in Year 3. This is an efficient way of making best use of the expertise of teachers. Pupils enjoy this way of teaching and move around the classrooms quickly and without fuss. Teachers make good use of resources for learning, including the material resources in the school and the wider resource of the school's grounds and environment.
22. However, in spite of this strong picture, there are nevertheless some weaknesses in some teaching. These are found in some lessons in certain classes in Years 1 to 4. Some lessons are not planned well and include activities that do not challenge pupils' thinking enough. For example, in a science lesson in Year 4, pupils were asked to complete poor quality worksheets to consolidate their learning about electrical circuits. These did not challenge pupils sufficiently and did not allow them to record their findings using an

appropriate scientific method. In a Year 3 literacy lesson, pupils were asked to copy out their work from the previous day in a format that prevented them from extending their learning of literacy or improving their handwriting. In an introduction to a topic on castles in Year 1, pupils did not have enough opportunities to handle the resources about castles in order to consolidate their learning. This was a pity as it would have helped pupils learn more effectively had they had opportunities to do so. In some lessons, classroom support assistants do not take an active enough role in whole class sessions. They are often inactive and not involved in supporting the learning of certain pupils. For example, this occurred in a Year 1 literacy lesson where the assistants only became involved in the lesson when they took out groups of pupils for their activities. In a Years 4/5 mathematics lesson, the teacher did not look at pupils' work enough during the lesson to find out what pupils had learnt. During this lesson, a group of pupils were making the same mistake repeatedly, while others were finding the tasks too easy. These weaknesses in the teaching of such lessons prevents pupils of all abilities from making the progress they should.

23. During the inspection there was a significant amount of very good teaching in literacy and numeracy. Many teachers teach basic skills well. For example, most young pupils know initial sounds and older pupils are taught the meaning of technical words in literacy, numeracy and science. Many understand the meaning of phonemes in literacy, vectors in mathematics and condensation in science. However, there remain some weaknesses in the teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy. While the majority are very good at planning work which is closely matched to pupils' needs and provides them with an interesting and challenging task, a minority of teachers do not always set tasks that are pitched at the level of pupils' prior attainment. Some do not set activities for pupils that promote their learning well enough and time is wasted in lessons. Yet in other lessons teachers have organised their pupils into small groups and matched work extremely well to their learning needs. In such classes when the whole class is being taught together, pupils who require additional support sit near a classroom assistant who provides excellent support in a variety of ways while allowing pupils to remain part of the whole lesson. During the inspection the teaching was best in art, physical education and personal, social and health education. In these lessons, the teaching was always at least good and often much better. Good teaching was also observed in information and communication technology, science, history and religious education. However, there were weaknesses also in the teaching in these subjects. These reflect the weaknesses mentioned above. Weaknesses in geography, music, religious education and design and technology shown through the work pupils have done in these subjects since last September arise much more from the narrowness of the curriculum for all pupils in these subjects than the quality of teaching when the subjects are actually taught.

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

24. The National Curriculum is in place, although the curriculum for music, religious education and geography lacks breadth. However, the school provides pupils with a very good range of learning opportunities outside the National Curriculum. Pupils receive a rich and broad curriculum of a good quality that gives pupils a great deal of variety of experience. This includes strong personal and social development as well as activities concerning health education, environmental education and education for citizenship. The statutory requirements for collective acts of worship are met. Such acts of worship take place daily at assemblies and during class 'candle time'. They are led on different days by a variety of teachers.
25. Better planning and distribution of time exists in the curriculum for older pupils than for most of the younger age range. The older pupils also have a broader range of activities. More than half of the curriculum time in all classes is devoted to English and mathematics

and this produces a lack of balance in other subjects. Insufficient time is allocated to design and technology, geography and music. There is evidence of good cross-curricular links in some lessons, particularly in Year 6 when pupils were preparing for a visit to the City Council chambers. The management of curriculum development could be improved; for example, there is little evidence that curriculum co-ordinators have an impact on teaching and learning in the school. Information about the quality of pupils' work and their achievements are not consistently used to challenge teachers to improve standards and co-ordinators have little opportunity to monitor and evaluate what goes on in the classrooms in Years 1 to 6.

26. Both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are used with good effect in the school. The decision to place pupils in ability groups for mathematics from Year 2 upwards is successful. Occasionally, year groups are mixed, for example in Years 4 and 5. Consideration is being given to applying the same process to the teaching of literacy.
27. Gifted or talented pupils are catered for through specialised teaching, as well as via an excellent range of extra-curricular classes and clubs. At the time of inspection these included: needlework, design and technology, various musical activities, homework, library, computers, science, football, games, green club and films. The clubs are aimed more at the older age range and most often occur after school. However, younger pupils also take part sometimes. For example, the early years choir occurs at lunchtime. An example of one club showed that pupils were working hard to extend their skills and at the same time they were being warned of potential injury in a sporting activity. Some clubs extend beyond the school with the permission of the parents. For example, the history club makes regular out of school visits to such places as the military museum. There are also opportunities for pupils to take part in residential experiences. Examples of these have been trips to Dorset and Northumberland as well as to foreign countries. The school has links with other schools in Austria and Holland. Most recently pupils have experienced a Northumbrian adventure. There, for example, they had opportunities to visit places of historical interest such as Hadrian's Wall and to be involved in outdoor pursuits.
28. Arrangements to ensure that all pupils are included in school activities and that they have equal access and opportunity are excellent. The special language unit has been closely integrated into the work of the mainstream school for some years. The school ensures that pupils in financial hardship are not disadvantaged. Throughout the period of inspection it was clear that pupils with special educational needs were well catered for. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully involved in the life of the school. There are also some pupils with disabilities who have their needs well attended to both within the school and by appropriate liaison with outside agencies.
29. Key aspects of personal and social development include attention to the misuse of substances, sex education, community education, equal opportunities, anti-bullying and discipline. There are also visits from the school nurse to discuss puberty with the older pupils and there is a wide range of involvement from local social services to support other issues. The success of these policies is demonstrated by the fact that there is no bullying, sexism or racism in the school and all pupils work together in a happy and supportive way.
30. The school has very good links with the community that contribute to the pupils' learning. It fosters these relationships by supporting such funds as 'Christian Aid' and 'The Lord Mayor's Charity'. The school also has very close links with the local Housing Action Trust whose aim is to change the quality of life for residents. The Trust values the high community involvement of the school, for example, in its planning to use a brand new community room for local people and a playgroup. The school also has links with the local police, Erdington Business and Education partnership, the leisure complex, two local churches and an evangelical group who assist with the costs of pupil holidays. In addition,

the school takes a very active part in the Castlevale Gala Day and also organises the Arts Week in which all local schools participate.

31. The school has satisfactory relationships with partner institutions such as the local secondary school, the pre-school support group and the local maintained nursery at Castlevale. There are also links with a Senior Citizen home at Christmas and harvest time. Other outside agencies with which the school has involvement are Birmingham pupil support services, the educational welfare officer, the educational psychologist, the school nurse and social services,
32. This very good personal development of all pupils is a direct result of the arrangements that the school has in providing a very wide range of experiences together with the way in which staff work with and treat pupils. These procedures are very good and are excellent for the pupils' moral and social education, an improvement over the very good provision outlined in the previous inspection. As soon as visitors enter the school they are aware through the presentation of the school, the originality of displays and the happy but dignified demeanour of the community that this is a very caring school. Parents regard Topcliffe School very highly because they recognise that it helps their children become responsible young citizens. For example, the pupils have a School Council and as well as issues personal to the school the Council is involved in such activities as taking part in Blue Peter Appeals. The council is given an allocation of money to spend each year and it decides on how best to spend it with the interests of the pupils in mind. Last year the Council spent money on enhancing the playground resources. Year 6 pupils are assigned to infant classes at wet playtimes to supervise and help younger pupils and there is also other evidence that pupils take responsibility in minor administrative tasks on behalf of other adults in the school.
33. The school helps pupils to experience feelings beyond their own particular experience through the very good arrangements for promoting their spiritual development. Some of the assemblies are outstanding and remarkably high levels of joy, gladness and celebration are apparent. It must be virtually impossible to provide a better start to a working week than the assembly seen on the first day of the inspection. Eyes shone with exhilaration as pupils relished their singing. Stunned silence greeted the arrival of an urchin until the penny dropped and pupils reflected on the difference between wealth and poverty. Many brilliant displays around the school inspire pupils to think about their responses beyond their own familiar activities. Even the trickling water in the garden display at the entrance hall where a holy statue nestles in the floodlight greenery stimulates the inner senses.
34. Topcliffe School is an exceptionally moral community. Pupils are very aware of the differences between right and wrong. It carefully and deliberately nurtures the rights and responsibilities of every member of the community. The excellent relationships fostered within the community and the clear expectations of correct behaviour create an outstanding framework for moral development. Pupils are given very good opportunities within lessons to consider moral issues. Year 5 pupils clearly understood the importance of being loyal to absent friends as they sensitively shared their feelings about each other during an excellent personal and social education lesson. Again the displays around the school are so colourful and imaginative that they cannot fail to draw pupils attention to, and involve them in, moral issues. Every child, for instance, makes a promise annually and writes it on a paper leaf which 'grows' throughout the year on the cardboard tree in the school hall.
35. The school has excellent arrangements for promoting the social development of every pupil. The most striking feature of these arrangements is the enormous number and range of opportunities for pupils to visit other places and take part in activities either in or out of school which they would not otherwise be able to do. Corridor walls are full of

photographs of groups of children participating in a myriad of physical, creative, artistic and musical activities both in the school and in sports centres, nature parks, museums and theatres. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to use their initiative in lessons and elsewhere. The school also provides very good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for others, including pairing older classes with younger ones. These partnership classes work well. Year 4 pupils share their candle time assembly with reception children and help look after these youngest children. Pupils recognise the importance of accepting responsibility, for instance caring for their own particular part of the school. The pupils say that the excellent promotion of care for the environment fosters this acute sense of responsibility.

36. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to learn about their own culture in general and life in Birmingham in particular, including participation in a variety of religious and social festivals throughout the year. The education for life programme is very valuable in increasing the pupils' social and cultural awareness. Year 6 pupils learnt an amazing amount very quickly about democracy, Birmingham history and civic arrangements in the introductory lesson prior to a visit to the City Chambers. Pupils are also involved in activities such as an Easter Bonnet parade and in maypole dancing which is organised as part of 'May Fest'. The school recognises and promotes the talents of many famous artists, authors, musicians and sports people in the displays around the school. The work of Topcliffe pupils is included in many of these displays.
37. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about other cultures. An extremely colourful Egyptian display prompted one child to aspire to be an Egyptologist. There are celebrations of other cultures during Arts week, which is organised by the school, when dancers from India and a South American pan-pipe band are asked to perform. Photographs around the school show the delight on the faces of boys as they attempt to copy Caribbean dancers dressed in grass skirts. Multicultural displays serve to raise pupils' awareness of famous black people such as Mary Seacole and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Art lessons have focused on African art. The school encourages pupils to consider some of the world's major religions and to understand the importance of other faith's major festivals. There are, for example, displays of work in the school showing evidence of pupils experiencing Hinduism and Chinese New Year in their work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. Parents recognise that the school takes very good care of all its pupils. Some of the arrangements have improved since the previous inspection and none have deteriorated. The school fosters excellent relationships throughout the community. This ensures that pupils feel safe and secure and always have someone to turn to for help and support. Parents and pupils say that all staff know the pupils exceptionally well and are instantly prepared to attend to individual needs as they emerge. They provide comfort to troubled or worried children and very good help and consolation to any who are sick or injured.
39. The condition of the building is very good and it is kept very clean. This, coupled with routine checks and inspections, successfully reduces the risk to the health and safety of pupils and staff. The school is rightly trying very hard to fund improvements to the surface of the playgrounds. Child protection procedures need to be strengthened, as a matter of urgency, by thorough training of the whole staff.
40. Attendance at the school is average and, therefore, satisfactory when compared with all schools in the country. Staff are vigilant about recording absence and requesting absence notes on the pupils' return. The importance of good attendance is well promoted using certificates and celebration assemblies and displaying results on notice boards. Despite the good procedures which the school has for promoting the importance of daily attendance, it is reported that there are families who will keep pupils absent from school

for a wide variety of minor reasons. While the office staff are very conscientious about monitoring attendance on a fortnightly basis, the school does not follow up absence immediately.

41. Staff have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. They expect pupils to take responsibility for themselves and encourage pupils to recognise when these high standards are not maintained. One look or raised eyebrow is often enough to divert a possible deterioration. The dignity of all pupils as they enter classrooms or the hall for assembly is a direct result of pupils' understanding the importance of good behaviour. Their often exemplary behaviour in the playground demonstrates the care which staff take to teach and re-enforce good behaviour. Almost all staff constantly and deliberately praise good behaviour and reward pupils who experience difficulty, but who try very hard to conform. The school rarely uses any form of sanction and has never used permanent exclusion. Parents and pupils recognise that it promotes an environment free from bullying and any form of harassment exceptionally well.
42. The school has good arrangements for assessing how pupils are getting on with their studies and makes satisfactory use of assessment results to inform future activities. Arrangements are good in English and mathematics. Regular testing and recording ensures that pupils' progress is tracked and termly records are kept of pupils' attainment. These give useful information about pupils' progress and identify areas of underachievement in these subjects. Practice is not quite as good in science and the other subjects taught. The school has not yet introduced a whole school approach to assessment. These limitations restrict the school's opportunity to use assessment information about individuals and groups of pupils to track, compare, predict and to motivate at individual subject level and at whole school level. Teachers' day to day assessment is good. Class work is marked regularly and teachers make good use of questioning within lessons to assess individuals' progress.
43. The school helps pupils learn well by providing good support for their academic and personal development. Staff know their pupils very well and carefully encourage them to try harder in areas of weakness. Teachers' support of pupils' learning varies from excellent to satisfactory and the reason for this is the wide variation in the quality of teachers' planning and teaching of different subjects. The best examples show teachers sharing targets for improvement with the pupils in English and mathematics and they review these targets regularly. The older pupils in particular are able to describe the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to achieve the next level. Target setting is not so formal or deliberate in the other subjects or lower down the school. The school keeps a good range of records about pupils' personal development. Records contain information about rewards given such as 'child of the week' or any particular behaviour situations. These ensure that teachers track and share with pupils and parents particular aspects of a pupil's personal development.
44. There is good support given to pupils with speech and language difficulties in the school's additional unit designed for this purpose. An additional teacher and an assistant are employed here. The pupils in this unit receive small group attention outside their classrooms for a part of each day and for the rest of the day they work alongside the rest of the pupils in their class. The support for these pupils has been hindered by the lack of a speech therapist for the past year.
45. The school has an above average number of pupils who have special educational needs. The provision made for them is good throughout the school. Teachers and classroom support assistants know the pupils well and carefully plan to meet their individual needs. All pupils with special educational needs are assessed each September. This is done at the school with the class teacher, parents, special educational needs co-ordinator and the

support of a specialist from the local education authority. This is very effective in working out each pupil's exact educational needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Parents recognise that this is a very good school for their children. They are in almost total agreement that their children are making good progress because of good teaching and hard work in a school which they like. They say that the school is helping their children mature and that behaviour is good. As parents, they feel that the right amount of homework is set and that they would feel comfortable approaching the school with any problems or queries. The overwhelming majority who answered the questionnaire say that the school is well managed and works closely with parents. There is similar agreement that parents are kept well informed about their child's progress and that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team agrees with the parents' views.
47. The school embraces its parents. The presentation of the school is wonderful and the superb displays not only enchant parents and visitors, but also give tremendous insight into the range of activities which occupy and delight the pupils. Staff commit significant time and energy to communicating with parents. All teachers accompany their class into the playground at the end of the day seeking to engage parents in discussion. Staff don coats and umbrellas to brave the elements in atrocious weather conditions in order to maintain communication.
48. The school provides a good range of general information to parents. The pack for new parents, the prospectus and Topcliffe Times termly newsletter are carefully produced and give vibrant information about life at the school. The annual report from governors does not, however, reflect the same vibrancy and does not fully comply with legal requirements.
49. Topcliffe School produces good annual reports for parents about the work of individual children. These reports give detailed descriptions in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science about what pupils are good at and where pupils experience difficulties. They give good suggestions for securing improvement in these core subjects. The reports also give good overall general pictures of each pupil and illustrate the clear understanding that the school has of children as individuals.
50. A small number of parents have time to help in school. They do so in areas such as reading, arts and crafts, supporting some of the clubs and volunteering to become parent governors. The school makes satisfactory use of homework and encourages parents to hear their children read at home through the regular use of home reading books. The school tries hard to involve parents in the education of their children, but is less successful in this aim. The vast majority of parents are very happy to support from afar, valuing the school enormously, but not committing themselves to active involvement.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher has a clear vision for the education of children. This is shown in the extensive and very good set of aims for the school which are largely being met and reflected in the good quality of education experienced by pupils in the school. The acting headteacher has for a long time worked in partnership with the head and he shares similar values.⁸ The school is, therefore, continuing to experience strong, caring leadership. The head and senior staff have been very successful in translating their vision to provide a high quality educational experience for children through the work of and in partnership with

⁸ The headteacher is on long term leave due to ill health. At the time of the inspection there is no indication of a time when she will return to school.

thoroughly committed teachers, support staff and others directly linked with Topcliffe School. All have a strong sense of shared beliefs and values about the way in which the school should run and develop. Ninety-five per cent of parents in their pre-inspection questionnaire quite rightly recognised the leadership and management of the school as being good.

52. The school runs very smoothly and all staff are highly committed and work very hard so that the school is successful in all it does. The staff are a strong, cohesive team working to ensure that the school's aims are met well. The two curriculum issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have been worked on, one much more successfully than the other; however, the school is well placed for further improvement. There are and have been for some time, however, weaknesses in some aspects of management, not in relation to the overall running of the school, but in the delegation of responsibilities which ensure the effectiveness of such delegated roles. For example, with the exception of literacy, numeracy and science, subject co-ordinators are unable to influence the development of their subject throughout the school. They are not in a position to run a managed programme of monitoring or provide teaching support or development feedback over lesson planning for their subject. There are also some weaknesses in the management of the school finance.
53. All staff have high expectations about what the school can do for its pupils. Subject co-ordinators are very largely highly conscientious and want to find time to influence teaching and, therefore, help teachers in the subject(s) for which they have responsibility, for example physical education, design and technology, geography and art. With this aim in mind, several teachers have worked extremely hard to produce an overall teaching plan for each class. This means that from reception to Year 6, most subject co-ordinators have written a scheme of work for teachers to use in the planning of their lessons for each week of the school year. In most cases the co-ordinator sees teachers' plans but they are not required to evaluate and comment on these plans.
54. The governors are highly supportive of the school, the head teacher and all the staff. Many governors work in the school, some in a voluntary capacity to support pupils' learning. However, their role as a 'critical friend' of the school has yet to be developed. Governors are not, for example,
- examining the way in which the school reaches its target setting for Year 6 tests in English and mathematics;
 - asking for an explanation of the school's analysis of its performance both in the national tests and in other subjects and activities, and how the school compares with other schools nationally and as well as similar schools nationally;
 - discussing the merits or otherwise of the school development; and
 - keeping a check on school finances.
- Improvements in these areas will allow governors to use such information to objectively challenge and support what the school is doing.
55. In other ways the governors' statutory requirements are met. There are appropriate policies in place on nearly all aspects of the life and work of the school. An annual meeting is held and an annual report is produced, although not all information essential to the report is always included. The governing body has a well established and appropriate committee structure, but clear terms of reference are not completely in place. Meetings have agendas and minutes. Governors nevertheless need to increase their knowledge about the work of the school so they easily recognise areas of strength and can offer an objective view on prioritising areas to be developed or improved.
56. The school development plan is the result of wide consultation. All staff identify areas for improvement and development for the forthcoming school year. The plan is an extensive list of all that is expected to happen in the school in the forthcoming year. While this is

valued and is scheduled to remain as a way of showing what the school plans to achieve, the effectiveness of the plan is not assessed because the plan pays very little attention to working out exactly the benefits of implementation to pupils. There is also no priority of developments or monitoring of the effectiveness of its expenditure. The school has no facility for identifying longer-term relatively high cost needs and saving for these. In view of these facts, together with the lack of use of performance data about pupils' standards the school does not operate a system based on the ideas of best value. Nevertheless, the school spends money strongly in the interests of supporting pupils and providing them with very good quality resources.

57. A clear policy exists for special educational needs and educational inclusion for all pupils. The role of the co-ordinator is clearly defined. However, the school has been operating for several months without the support of a teacher to co ordinate special educational needs because the co-ordinator for special educational needs is on long-term leave due to ill health. The school has, after three months, just begun to introduce and induct another teacher into the role. For example, she already has had some involvement in preparing teachers for the new code of practice published earlier this year. A pupil support officer from Birmingham local education authority makes a weekly visit and has helped the school a great deal during this period by supporting the management of the special educational needs statements and individual education plans. The educational psychologist visits the school every half term to review the progress of pupils.
58. The school ensures that all pupils have access to any necessary support and that their needs are met in lessons. The acting co-ordinator links well with fellow teachers and support staff and is in regular contact with concerned external agencies such as the Learning Support Service, the Educational Psychology Service, Social Services and relevant medical staff. Early contact is made with all parents as soon as concerns are noted about their children and there is evidence of parental involvement in all stages of the Code of Practice. The school sees support from parents as important. One pupil with special needs, although having difficulties, reads to mum at home each night and visits the local library regularly to help meet his learning targets. The organisation and the quality of the records collected and organised by the co-ordinators, including the register of special educational needs, are very good. Good-quality and detailed individual education plans are reviewed regularly and learning targets modified accordingly. These targets are broken down to learning objectives and any special help or action planned is clearly identified.
59. The school is making the best possible use of all available resources to achieve the standards of progress seen and high-quality teaching. The school governing body finance committee has until very recently sanctioned expenditure beyond the means of the school budget and is not monitoring expenditure effectively. Therefore, the school is running a deficit budget which is projected to increase substantially by the end of this financial year. There is now agreement between the local education authority, acting headteacher and the finance committee that the school will be more prudent and, over the next few years, work towards paying off its deficit by an agreed amount per year. The most recent financial audit⁹ revealed that some of the recommendations from the previous audit had not been achieved and also made several significant recommendations to be put in place immediately.
60. The school, including the finance committee, receive up-to-date financial information from the school's computerised systems. This is monitored by an efficient school finance officer and on a weekly basis by an officer from the local education authority finance department. The school receives grants under the government's standards fund for a wide range of projects, including staff training and booster classes for pupils. These are used well for the

⁹ November 2001

purpose intended and staff appreciate the positive impact they have on their teaching and pupils' learning. Neither the school nor the governing body is fully conversant with 'best value' principles. However, the day-to-day financial control and administration are efficient. The school office is well equipped and there is effective use of new technology here in support of the work of the school. The school's administration staff have a good understanding of their duties, which they undertake conscientiously, and make a valued contribution to the effective running of the school.

61. The staff are well qualified and reflect a wide range of experience. The headteacher and special educational needs co-ordinator are on long term leave due to illness. The deputy head has taken the role of acting headteacher and there are plans to provide temporary cover for the responsibility of special educational needs; however, as yet the school has not been able to recruit temporary support to ease the load on staff covering for absent colleagues. The quality of accommodation and learning resources are excellent.
62. Teachers and classroom support assistants are appropriately qualified and are well deployed to meet the needs of the pupils and to teach the National Curriculum in almost all classes. The only area where this is weaker is in Year 1 where the teacher has almost 40 pupils and assistants are not always deployed to best effect. Classroom assistants support pupils and teachers extremely well. They work with individual pupils and groups to very good effect. There is a need to ensure that their knowledge and skills through training needs are met in times of significant change as well as those of teachers. Teachers make good use of the training opportunities available to improve their knowledge and skills in many important areas of the curriculum, except in the case of information and communication technology and religious education. Planning for in-service training is effective and linked to the school development plan and to the teacher's own professional needs. The school has instituted its own programme of training accredited by the National College of Teachers. Teachers work hard as a team and are committed to raising standards. All have appropriate job descriptions.
63. An indication of the school's commitment to staff development is in its recognition as an Investor in People. Senior managers place a high priority on all staff being fully involved in school and personal development. The site manager, for example, also a school governor, was able to cite a central aim of the school as being *to create a safe, clean, working environment for its pupils*. Each teacher has a mentor who meets and agrees annual targets for development in the performance management cycle. Teachers over a period of years are given the opportunity to work with different classes and year groups and to lead different subjects as part of their continuing professional development. The school secretary, site manager and midday supervisors make a valuable and valued contribution to the smooth running of the school.
64. Excellent facilities are available for outdoor and indoor learning. The school grounds provide a rich resource for teaching and learning with a good variety of adapted or specialised accommodation such as the Classroom Garden, the Quiet Garden, the Pond and Wild Garden, the landscaped rockery, and the Foundation Stage outdoor area for physical development. The school is aware that the hard outdoor play areas need to be improved and has been working hard to make sure this happens. Most classrooms and corridors are fully carpeted and this helps create an improved ambience for learning. The school has many specialist areas in its internal accommodation. These include the well-stocked computer room, the mathematics corner for groups of pupils with special educational needs, and the separate gymnasium, dining room, and assembly hall and theatre. Classrooms are generally large and spacious and often very attractively presented and decorated. Around the school are beautiful displays of work done in a range of subjects, particularly art and history. The library is large and well stocked and resources have recently been entered onto a computer, but as a major school resource it remains under-used.

65. There are excellent resources for effective teaching of all areas of the curriculum. It was notable during the inspection that teachers could always call on and use accessible, relevant resources of high quality in a wide range of subjects. These included big books in English, cubes and square shapes for mathematics in Year 1, up-to-date computers and software in information and communication technology, keyboards, violins and recorders in music, and excellent furniture for Reception classes to participate in imaginative or creative play. The main areas that require improvements in resources are in design and technology, specifically construction equipment involving mechanics and electronics, and in English, the school should evaluate the effectiveness of the current very old main school reading scheme.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. In order to build on the hard work of the school and to improve the quality of education still further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
1. improve standards in English, especially writing, and in music, geography, design and technology and religious education by:
 - (i) ensuring that the high quality of subject planning for these subjects in some areas of the school is used to raise the quality of planning throughout the school;
 - (ii) improving the management of subject development and ideas for teaching through the expertise of curriculum co-ordinators;
 - (iii) considering the best ways to allow subject leaders to manage their curriculum area by, for example, influencing teachers' planning, teaching, assessment and knowledge;
 - (iv) evaluating the amount of time allocated and staff training required particularly for geography, music and design and technology teaching;
(paragraphs: 1, 4-5, 7, 52-53, 84-85, 87, 89, 92-93, 106, 113, 118-120, 123, 126, 142-143, 148, 152-153 and 158)
 2. increase the level of governors' involvement and accountability in all aspects of the monitoring and development of key features of the school. These should include:
 - (i) improving their understanding of the process of end of Key Stage 2 target setting for English and mathematics;
 - (ii) questioning the school's analysis of the performance data arising from national test results including comparisons with other schools;
 - (iii) monitoring the school budget by asking questions about expenditure;
 - (iv) setting up procedures to be involved in some part of school development planning so that the financial implications of the plan are understood and agreed. In addition governors must agree a strategy for reducing the high level of school overspend;
(paragraphs: 48 and 54-55)
 3. improve the tracking of pupils' attainment and achievements to:
 - (i) allow senior managers to identify overall strengths and areas for concern within whole year group;
 - (ii) promote school wide consistency of teachers' basic record keeping of key indicators of attainment and achievement by:
 - a. examining the ways in which test results and teachers' assessments are used by the head and governors to set realistic targets;
 - b. analysing school performance information and relating it to other features that may affect overall school results such as the number of pupils who are still at Topcliffe School in Year 5 who were also in Year 2;
 - c. evaluating current ways and considering new ways of tracking pupils' learning;
 - (iii) improve the quality of target setting for National Curriculum tests;
(paragraphs: 42-43, 54, 95, 106, 140, 147 and 158)
 4. improve attendance *(paragraphs 17 and 40)*.

In addition to the main areas for improvement, governors and senior management should consider the following subsidiary issues:-

- child protection procedures should be strengthened *(paragraph 39)*;
- ensure the governor's annual report meets legal requirements *(paragraphs 48, 55)*.

THE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE UNIT

67. The unit serves a wide area of the city and pupils are directed to the unit by the local authority. Responsibility for placing pupils in the unit and the next stage of their education lies with the local authority and not the school. There are four registered pupils in the unit, all of whom have Statements of Special Educational Need.
68. The pupils achieve well in all areas of the curriculum. This is due to the skilful organisation, planning and hard work by the staff in the unit. The teacher in charge and the teaching assistant work very well together. They are dedicated to providing the best possible education for all the pupils. Pupils' very special needs are assessed regularly and timetables are produced to ensure maxim integration into the mainstream Years 1 and 2 classes. The integration of pupils is handled very sensitively by all concerned. Class teachers are skilled at involving the unit pupils in all class activities.
69. The quality of teaching and learning in the unit is good. The teacher and the teaching assistant treat pupils with sensitivity and care. Questions are skilfully adapted and rephrased so that pupils can understand what is being asked. Praise is used well to raise pupils' self esteem and confidence. Staff work hard to establish good links with parents. Pupils' achievements are assessed regularly and learning is planned to build on what pupils know, can do and understand.
70. There has been no speech and language therapist working in the unit for over a year and this means that pupils are not receiving speech and language therapy as identified in their statements. The overall provision therefore, while being good in terms of pupils' education, is unsatisfactory as pupils are not receiving their entitlement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	85

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	5	20	22	15	1	0	0
Percentage	8	32	35	24	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	363
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	171

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	78

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance¹⁰

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.2
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

¹⁰ Having discovered that the computer system used at school makes the raw attendance scores worse than they are the figures for September 2001 to the end of January 2002 are: Authorised absence: 7.4 percent and unauthorised absence: 0.5 per cent

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	32	30	62

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	23	24	29
	Girls	27	23	30
	Total	50	47	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (80)	76 (71)	95 (89)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	21	28	24
	Girls	27	28	23
	Total	48	56	47
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	77 (76)	90 (82)	76 (78)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	21	24	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	12	11	18
	Girls	11	14	23
	Total	23	25	41
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	51 (82)	56 (91)	91 (89)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	13	16
	Girls	14	12	13
	Total	28	25	29
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	64 (61)	57 (62)	66 (59)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	324
Any other minority ethnic group	34

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) ¹¹	17.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.625
Average class size	27.92

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	201

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
	£
Total income	779,364
Total expenditure	787,021
Expenditure per pupil	2,282
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 12,503
Balance carried forward to next year	-20,160

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

¹¹ 2 teachers are on long term sick leave.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 17.9%

Number of questionnaires sent out	363
Number of questionnaires returned	65

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	18	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	29	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	26	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	51	38	7	2	2
The teaching is good.	71	27	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	35	5	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	23	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	54	35	3	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	60	35	0	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	31	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	32	6	0	0

Other issues raised by parents

At the end of the meeting the registered inspector asked parents to describe school using one word or short phrases, parents said:

- enthusiastic – staff and pupils;
- stimulating;
- inspiring;
- high but fair expectations;
- values all pupils.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

71. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. This is a considerable improvement on the sound provision and progress that was observed at the time of the previous inspection. Factors contributing to this include good teaching, high quality experiences and very effective support, which enable the children to make good gains in their acquisition of early skills and knowledge. Children join the reception classes at the start of the school year in which they become five years old. Early assessment information indicates that children enter the school with levels of all-round development and maturity, which are well below those of children of a similar age. In particular many children have difficulty using and understanding language. Reception staff are currently considering the most effective way to assess and track children's progress through the stepping stones¹² leading to the early learning goals¹³. This has correctly been identified as an area for improvement.
72. Children make good progress in the reception classes. As a result, by the time they enter Year 1 many of the children have achieved the early learning goals for their creative and physical development. However, attainment in communication, language and literacy is well below the level expected for children of this age. Attainment in some aspects of mathematics is below average. The teachers' good knowledge and understanding of what children should learn in their reception year, their high expectations and good planning together with very effective teamwork are some of the reasons for the good progress being made. Learning objectives in planning reflect the 'stepping stones' leading towards the early learning goals for children in the Foundation Stage. Carefully matched tasks ensure the right level of challenge for all. Children are well motivated by interesting and exciting tasks such as planning a trip on the role play 'pirate ship.' The brisk pace in lessons accelerates children's learning.
73. Learning resources are very good. The accommodation is spacious and organised very efficiently and provides an attractive and stimulating learning environment. The role-play room, which is currently a model of 'St David's Church', provides impressive opportunities for children to hold realistic mock weddings! This is due to the very hard work of the early years team who have provided excellent wedding outfits, flowers, music and food for the wedding reception. The outdoor play area and the range and quality of outdoor resources have also been dramatically improved since the previous inspection.

Personal, social and emotional development

74. Teaching in this area of learning is good. Nearly all the children enter the reception classes with immature skills in personal and emotional development. By the time they enter Year 1, the majority of children are achieving the early learning goals in this area. The staff place great emphasis on this area of development and the children make good progress, developing self-confidence as they learn to follow school routines. Children are encouraged to choose activities and resources for themselves. They enjoy selecting their own materials when making 'Mrs Pirate Puppets'. They take turns sensibly when using the large outdoor play equipment.

¹² These show teachers what they need to know about children's learning in each area of the Foundation Stage. They are the steps that children will take as they make progress towards reaching the Early Learning Goals for children under five. They show stage by stage the knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding children need to achieve the goals.

¹³ Early learning goals - these are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer mainly to achievements children make in connection with communication language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning, for example, in language and literacy pupils should be able to write their own name and other things such as labels and begin to write simple sentences.

75. The children's personal and social development is very well promoted by all the staff who are kind, caring and infinitely patient. The adults provide very good role models for the children, always treating each other, parents and children with courtesy and respect.
76. Staff have high expectations for all the children and this is reflected in the very good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning seen in both classes. The children are constantly encouraged to become socially independent by hanging up their own coats and by collecting and putting away their own equipment. This good teaching ensures that all the children are learning to work, play and co-operate well with each other.

Communication, language and literacy

77. Language skills are very limited for many children. In relation to their attainment on entry, all children make good progress in acquiring speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Nevertheless, only a very small minority of children achieve the expected standard on entry to Year 1. Staff take every opportunity to encourage children to communicate when working and playing. For instance, a nursery nurse interacted very successfully with a group of children who were attending a wedding in the role-play church. Children are introduced to new words such as 'groom' and encouraged to use appropriate phrases such as 'do you take this woman?' This skilful interaction by teachers improves the quality of the role-play considerably as many children have a limited vocabulary and play silently side by side with friends if there is no adult support. Basic writing skills are carefully taught with good attention given to pencil control and purposeful writing tasks.
78. For the majority of children, developmental writing is at an early stage. Most children have a good attempt at writing their first names independently. All children enjoy books and higher attaining children behave as readers, retelling stories using picture clues and memory to help them. Some of the pre-reading books are old fashioned and contain single pictures and words which give the child few opportunities to use language.

Mathematical development

79. Attainment is below average overall, although in children's use of numbers attainment is better. Many children can count to 10 and recognise these numbers. Higher attainers count beyond this. Staff focus well on mathematical language and children learn useful capacity words such as 'full' and 'empty'. Teaching is good. Planning is carefully matched to the differing learning needs of children. Children enjoy the practical activities, which help to motivate and sustain their interest. Good use is made of number songs and rhymes to reinforce mathematical skills. Most children make good gains in their learning as a result of good teaching, but skills in several aspects of mathematics remain below the expected level by the time the children start in Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

80. Teaching in this area of learning is good. Children enter the reception classes with limited experiences of the world around them. The staff take every opportunity to extend the children's knowledge and understanding of the world so that, in relation to their prior attainment, all children make good progress. Scientific knowledge and understanding are gained as children observe the changes which happen to ingredients when baking a wedding cake. They have planted bulbs and watched them grow. Good intervention and effective questions by all the adults develops scientific vocabulary. Children enjoy selecting materials to make pirate puppets. Higher attaining children describe clearly how they built simple boats from recycled materials and were very pleased when the boats 'sailed' across the water tray without sinking!

Physical development

81. Attainment in this area of learning is in line with that expected for children of this age. The imaginative development of the outdoor play area has been a major factor in helping the children to make good progress in the development of their physical skills. They can run, jump, balance and climb using a range of equipment and show good awareness of the needs of others in the space around them.
82. In a very good physical education lesson, children learned to listen carefully to instructions and work as part of a team when competing in 'hat races'. Some children found remembering instructions quite hard, but persevered and succeeded. The teacher and the nursery nurse were totally involved which encouraged and motivated the children. Fine motor skills develop well. Most children show increasing skill when controlling pencils, scissors, crayons and paintbrushes. By the time they join Year 1, most children will have achieved the expected level.

Creative development

83. Standards are as expected for children of this age. Good teaching ensures many opportunities for children to paint, print, draw and use collage and construction materials. Most children make good progress in developing these skills. For instance the children have painted impressive self-portraits of themselves wearing their school uniform. Although a large number of children have communication difficulties, they nevertheless really enjoy and benefit from role-play because of the way in which the adults support and extend their play. Reception staff work very hard to make the 'hat shop', 'the pirate ship' and 'St David's Church' into exciting and stimulating areas.

ENGLISH

84. At the time of the last inspection, overall standards in English were average. Since then standards have risen year on year and have been very impressive, especially when compared with standards reached in similar schools. In the 2001 national tests for 11-year-olds, standards fell. Details are shown in the following table.

End of Year 6 tests 2001 compared with all schools in England	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 standards when compared with all schools in England	End of Year 6 tests 2001 compared with similar schools in England	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 standards when compared with similar schools in England
Well below average (E)	Above average (E)	Average (D)	Above average (E)

85. These lower standards represent a good level of achievement for most pupils, as there was a large number of pupils with special educational needs taking the tests in 2001. Inspectors found the attainment of the current Year 2 pupils to be below average in reading and well

below average in writing. The table below shows standards attained in the national Reading and Writing tests in 2001:

Standards in WRITING compared with all schools in England.	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 standards in WRITING when compared with all schools in England	Standards in WRITING compared with similar schools in England.	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 standards in WRITING compared with similar schools in England
Well above average (E)	Above average (D)	Average (C)	Average (C)
Standards in READING compared with all schools in England.	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 standards in READING when compared with all schools in England	Standards in READING compared with similar schools in England.	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 standards in READING compared with similar schools in England
Well above average (E)	Above average (E)	Above average and in the top 40 per cent of similar schools (B)	Well above average and in the top 25 per cent of similar schools nationally (A)

86. Children enter the school with poor language skills in comparison with pupils of a similar age. They make good progress in their learning as a result of good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in literacy in relation to targets in their individual education plans. They receive good additional support and specially adapted work which meets their needs.
87. By the ages of 7 and 11, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is below average and, although progress varies, pupils make good progress overall. Adults in the reception classes promote and encourage communication at all times. Children's comments are listened to with sensitivity and interest by all staff during class and group discussions. In the Year 1 class, pupils made appropriate progress in developing and extending their speaking and listening skills during a discussion about 'spooky words' during a literacy lesson. Pupils' confidence in speaking in front of the whole class is consolidated and developed further in a few classes where there are opportunities to give oral explanations of their learning in subjects, such as science.
88. Year 6 pupils pay close attention to what their teachers say and higher attaining pupils reply to questions with thoughtful comment and detail. These older pupils are encouraged to debate and discuss their learning in many subjects. However, in many classes, teachers do not target questions to pupils of varying ability to check their comprehension. Drama is not used sufficiently to encourage speaking skills. A few teachers use rich and wide vocabulary to promote the pupils' interest in new words and also insist that pupils answer questions in full sentences. However, in some instances, teachers accept single word responses or nods to questions and pupils' speaking skills are not extended. Teachers do not always check that pupils have understood specific vocabulary in lessons and this results in confusion for a few pupils.
89. Pupils' attainment in reading by the age of seven is below the national average. Pupils make good progress from a low starting point. Higher attaining pupils achieve well and read at the expected level. They understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction books and know and use terms such as 'author', 'blurb', 'illustrator' and 'contents' correctly. The home/school partnership is a successful feature, although reading records do not clearly

indicate what parents need to focus on when listening to their children reading. Strengths and weaknesses in pupils' reading are not shared. A focus on the teaching of the letter sounds raises attainment and accelerates progress for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. However, many average and lower attaining pupils are not able to put sounds together to make words. Although pupils know many of the letter sounds, they confuse these with letter names and this impedes their progress. By the time they are 7, the higher attaining pupils read with accuracy and fluency and can competently discuss the characters in a familiar story. Pupils are introduced to an appropriate range of authors and stories. Consequently, higher attaining pupils show a good understanding of a range of texts and can refer to passages in books to support ideas. Some of the early reading books are very unattractive and unappealing to young readers. They contain little of interest to discuss and are not effective in promoting or extending pupils' reading.

90. Pupils make varied rates of progress in reading in the junior years. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils make good progress. Higher attaining pupils read with fluency, expression and obvious enjoyment. There are many lower attaining pupils who are not confident or fluent readers and this causes difficulties when learning in other subjects is dependent on reading. Some lower attaining pupils have difficulty in understanding their books and cannot deduce or predict what might happen next without considerable support. Guided reading is being taught and most teachers use this as an opportunity to teach reading skills to various groups. These recent initiatives have yet to have an impact on reading standards.
91. The library is used for small group work. There is a suitable range of non-fiction books and older pupils know and can use the Dewey system. There appears to be very little research using the non-fiction books in the library. The library is spacious, attractive and bright and large enough for a whole class.
92. Standards in writing are well below average by Year 2. From a well below average starting point pupils achieve well. Higher attaining pupils write stories or news in a reasonable sequence. A higher attaining pupil skilfully painted a vivid word picture of a storm: *'It was midnight, there was a crashing storm with big waves, lightening, smashing windows, cracks in the floor'*. Above average pupils use punctuation correctly and learn the importance of commas to separate items in a list. They also spell simple words correctly. Lower attaining pupils struggle with spelling words correctly. Handwriting is just beginning to develop, but for many lower attaining pupils it is not yet well positioned and the letters are not always clearly formed.
93. By Year 6, attainment is below average. All pupils make good progress in Years 5 and 6 through a vibrant curriculum and very good teaching. Lower attaining pupils experience considerable difficulty in combining neat writing, correct spelling and interesting content into a piece of writing. Punctuation and handwriting are often the best part of the writing as many pupils find writing imaginatively very hard. However, in a very successful Year 6 literacy lesson pupils produced some fascinating *'Seasons Haiku'* in response to inspirational and motivating teaching. One pupil with special educational needs wrote *'Fat snowmen melting'*. Average pupils can write detailed book reviews with good recall and some insight. Above average pupils have some good vocabulary. It is not extensive, but some very good descriptive words are understood and used. For instance, one pupil maturely described *Macbeth's* breakdown after the murder of Duncan: *'He started to get indecisive, then he got confused and felt guilty when he saw the dagger illusions, but when he killed Duncan he fell to pieces'*. Average and above average pupils achieve particularly well because of the outstanding quality of the teacher's marking in their literacy books. They are clearly praised for good endeavours, but are also informed what they have to do to improve. Their written work shows good improvement in response to this marking.

94. Infant and Junior pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to word process their English work using computers. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills in other subjects.
95. The quality of teaching is good overall and results in good learning. Teachers plan effectively and work imaginatively to allow pupils to practise simple skills. They work hard to interest pupils in the activities. They know pupils well and provide good models for them as readers. They manage the class effectively and have a good understanding of how to teach reading and writing. Teachers and pupils like and respect each other and pupils are well behaved, respond extremely well to their teachers and work hard. Teachers make sure pupils know what they are expected to learn and how this links to what they have covered previously. Many, but not all, teachers make good use of question and answer sessions to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Most teachers maintain a brisk lesson pace and keep pupils busy. This is particularly evident in the literacy hour lessons where pupils waste no time in settling to group activities after sharing a class discussion. Teachers' increasing understanding and confidence in the National Literacy Strategy are helping to improve learning. Assessment of reading and writing is thorough and regular, although results from assessments are not used consistently to target groups of pupils to raise attainment.
96. All staff and in particular the English co-ordinator are committed to raising standards of attainment in English. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, hard working and makes an invaluable personal contribution to the subject. She has prepared a very useful literacy action plan clearly detailing future improvements. Due to staff illnesses the co-ordinator has been unable to look at English teaching and learning which is crucial to ensure a consistent approach. The reading scheme is quite old and requires replacing. There is no policy or guidelines for speaking and listening.

MATHEMATICS

97. The following table gives a general outline of the standards in mathematics arising from the end of Year 6 tests in 2001.

End of Year 6 tests 2001 compared with all schools in England	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 standards when compared with all schools in England	End of Year 6 tests 2001 compared with similar schools in England	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 standards when compared with similar schools in England
Well below average (E)	Above average (B)	Average (C)	Above average (B)

98. Over the last four years the trend of attainment has been strongly upwards, however, the 2001 results show a remarkable drop in overall standards in Year 6. The end of Year 6 test results have improved year on year and by 2000 were well above average compared with those nationally. While the test results were higher in 2001 than at the time of the last inspection the national average has increased year on year, therefore the drop last year shows that they are well below the 2001 national average. The gap between the performance of boys and girls changes from year to year, but over the last four years in general the girls have been doing better than boys. A similar pattern of performance exists in English, and in science.
99. Inspection findings show that standards are now in line with the national average for pupils aged 11, although some pupils in Year 6 are attaining levels beyond national expectations. They are able, for example, to work efficiently with fractions and decimals as well as calculating the areas of non-standard shapes. Another class of Year 5 pupils had about a

quarter of pupils working beyond national expectations in an activity involving telling the time in more than one way. This shows that while overall attainment is likely to be below the national average, the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels is likely to be above the national average.

100. The following table gives a general outline of the standards in mathematics arising from the end of Year 2 tests in 2001.

Standards compared with all schools in England.	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 standards when compared with all schools in England	Standards compared with similar schools in England	Percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 standards compared with similar schools in England
Well above average (A)	Above average (B)	Very high. In the top 5 per cent of schools nationally (A*)	Very high. In the top 5 per cent of schools nationally (A*)

101. These results, for Year 2 pupils in 2001, show that pupils have been performing extremely well and the results turned out to be much higher than those forecast by their teachers. Achievements by boys and girls are similar. In mathematics the trend in standards is strongly upwards and above the national trend of improvement. Standards have risen from well below average to well above average and attainment in mathematics has improved in significant steps year by year since the last inspection. The performance in mathematics has been significantly better than in reading or writing in English.

102. Inspection findings show that standards are presently below the national average for 7-year-old pupils. However, in the infant classes, teaching is good overall and very good in Year 2. In Year 1, although pupils' attainment is below average, their progress is good. They count up to 100 and are able to work out that after 2, 4, 6, 8, comes 10, 12, 14, in number patterns. They also show the ability to count backwards and to estimate correctly. Lessons are taught at a speed that keeps pupils minds focused and because the topics are well planned teachers maintain their pupils' interest very well. For example, in a lower ability Year 2 class lessons taught at a good pace kept the interest of pupils who showed that they could keep up, perform tasks at a faster rate than they could previously and achieve well when compared with their previous attainment. The pace of learning increased as the lesson developed because the teacher has well planned learning targets which were clearly written so the whole class could see and use them. The teacher drew the pupils' attention to this at the beginning of the lesson and also near the end when she asked questions to show to the pupils whether or not they had learned what was expected of them. They were pleased because their answers indicate they had understood the mathematics taught to them in this lesson. The pupils also enjoyed their lesson because good resources were used, such as a fuzz-buzz game. There is good use of the learning support assistants for pupils with special educational needs. When teaching loses sight of the purpose of the lesson, for example in one unsatisfactory lesson about halves and quarters, pupils became much more interested in cutting and sticking than the mathematics of understanding proportions. In this lesson there was no suitable extension work for the most able pupils.

103. The teaching of pupils aged 7 to 11 is good overall and in some cases very good or even excellent. In one Year 4 class excellent teaching revealed clear instructions to pupils who became very quickly involved in their group numeracy activity. One example was counting forwards and backwards in tens starting at 2 and finishing at 112. The teacher was alert to pupils who made mistakes and the classroom support assistant directed the attention of unsure learners to a large wall number square to help those who were uncertain about the sequence of numbers. Two thirds of the pupils have special educational needs and were

working with enthusiasm, interest and a significant degree of accuracy. In such instances teachers' questioning is effective in leading pupils stage by stage towards a good understanding of their work. Good attention is paid to number vocabulary and there is good use of resources. Pupils build a sequence by predicting. All lessons begin with a similar mental activity allowing pupils to become more and more comfortable with the use of numbers in their head. Pupils enjoy success and the teachers recognise this and become involved in their success too. Pupils concentrate hard and have the correct attitudes to learning. They show this by talking to the teacher and the other pupils, explaining how they arrive at the correct answers using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. Tasks given by the teacher become progressively harder. For example, in Year 6, pupils quickly understood how to work out the area of a rectangle and were able to use their knowledge to calculate the area of irregular shapes.

104. There are further examples of excellent teaching. For example, in Year 6 imaginative resources were used to promote pupils' understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. The teacher's good relationships with the pupils made them interested and keen learners. In another Year 6 class the teacher's lively approach enabled lower ability pupils to produce work in line with national expectations focusing on patterns. One pupil wanted to extend his knowledge when asking, 'does the same work with multiplication and division?' The pace and challenge of teaching is very good because, for example, teachers give time limits and pupils respond to such deadlines with enthusiasm. Teachers plan different tasks for pupils of different abilities and, therefore, good progress and often very good progress is a feature of most lessons. In another class good questioning skills encourage pupils to think of ways to improve their work. In less successful teaching there is a lack of warmth with the pupils and a failure to adequately check what pupils are doing. Higher attaining pupils could make more progress by working independently, but in some classes are inhibited because the pace is too slow.
105. Progress is better in Years 5 and 6 than in most Years 3 and 4 classes. In other cases when teaching is weaker many pupils finish early and there are no extension activities planned. Boys and girls work well together and the opportunities to learn are the same. The few pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds and all pupils with special educational needs are given the same good opportunities as other pupils.
106. An experienced teacher has been co-ordinating mathematics since the last inspection and has effectively introduced the Numeracy Hour and built up a bank of mathematics resources which are plentiful and have a positive effect on pupils' learning. There is a very attractive mathematics area outside classrooms where pupils regularly work with support assistants in small groups. These sessions are successful and enjoyed by pupils. The mathematics policy and scheme of work are up-to-date, of a good quality and mostly promote very good planning for the teaching of mathematics. There is also a marking policy. However, apart from a few classes, there is little indication in the pupils' workbooks that the marking of pupils' work enhances their learning. Some teachers do give positive mathematical comments, but many comments stop at praise. There is evidence that the school keeps records of pupils' attainment and targets pupils accordingly taking previous performance into consideration. However, there is no evidence that performance data is being used at senior management level to challenge teachers to improve standards. The mathematics co-ordinator and the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator monitor teachers' plans and also arrange work-sampling sessions. However, there is no opportunity for the co-ordinator to have additional impact throughout the school to monitor teaching and learning and support teachers in the classroom. The computer suite is used effectively to teach mathematics and all classes in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to work in the information and communication technology suite on mathematics activities once per week.

SCIENCE

107. In the 2001 national tests for 11-year-olds, standards in science were average when compared with all schools. They were well above average when compared with schools similar to Topcliffe. Over the past five years, standards have risen at a similar rate to those nationally. Over the past three years, boys and girls have attained at similar levels in science and in both cases they have achieved significantly better than their peers have nationally. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in science.
108. Most pupils begin Year 1 at below the nationally expected level. In the 2001 teacher assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2, nearly all pupils attained the nationally expected level. This indicates that pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in science. No pupil reached above that level. This is a strong picture and represents considerable achievement by pupils.
109. Inspection evidence supports the standards pupils attained in the 2001 national tests. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is similar to that expected nationally. However, few pupils attain above this level. By the time they leave the school, most pupils achieve the national standard and many higher than this. The majority of pupils throughout the school make good progress in science. High attaining pupils make very good progress in Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall, often due to the structured nature of some of the tasks they are asked to carry out. There is no difference between the attainment of boys and girls in science; they each make good progress in the subject. This is a similar picture to that at the last inspection.
110. By the age of 7, most pupils name parts of plants and of the body. They recognise the importance of light and heat for the growth of seeds and plants. They sort materials out by their properties and understand the benefits of recycling materials. They have a sound understanding of healthy eating. Much of this knowledge and understanding is consolidated and develop further during Years 3 to 6. By the time they leave the school, most pupils have carried out investigations into plant growth and know the main parts of plants; for example, in a Year 3 lesson pupils listened carefully to a very interesting explanation about how and why plants grow. Pupils also asked and answered questions and then had to use this knowledge to think and work out, by drawing and labelling, what their plant might look like after one, then two, three and after four weeks growth. In a Year 6 lesson, as in other science lessons, teachers and pupils frequently use scientific vocabulary when talking about the work being done. For example, carbon dioxide, nutrition, energy amongst younger pupils as well as understanding pollination and the features of plants and animals that help them survive in their habitats with older pupils. They understand how the food chain works with plants and animals. They understand the differences between solids, liquids and gases and that air has weight. For example, an experiment was used to show and explain why condensation occurs and to recognise the links between condensation, evaporation and temperature. Pupils also carry out investigations with electrical circuits. They understand the importance of matching voltage on a circuit and can include lights, buzzers and motors on simple electrical circuits. They know the relative size of the sun, moon and earth. Most understand the properties of certain materials. For example, they carry out investigations into how well materials such as paper clips, tin foil and coins conduct electricity. They test out what materials act as the most effective insulators. They understand that the properties of materials make them suitable for different purposes. For example, pupils have studied why certain materials such as bricks, cement, wood and glass are appropriate for use in the building of a school.
111. The quality of teaching is sound in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 to 6. This accounts for the good progress made by pupils throughout the school. This is a similar picture to that at the last inspection. There are a number of features that characterise the good teaching. Lessons are well planned and teachers make it clear to pupils what they are to

do and what is expected of them. Teachers teach directly to these expectations during lessons to ensure pupils understand and learn what has been planned for them. Good relationships between adults and pupils help pupils to feel positive about themselves and their learning. In Years 1 and 2, teaching assistants help pupils learn effectively. In Years 3 to 6, the tasks set for pupils are generally well matched to their needs. In these classes, teachers ask searching questions of pupils to help them clarify and extend their thinking. Good subject expertise is a significant feature in the most effective lessons. Pupils respond eagerly to this high quality teaching and they have a desire to learn and succeed in the subject. They find many of the lessons very interesting and concentrate hard in them. Most pupils are well behaved in science lessons.

112. However, the teaching is not always as positive as this. Sometimes, the teacher directs lessons too much and pupils do not always have opportunities to think and work things out for themselves. With the exceptions of one Year 4 class, Year 5 and Year 6, not enough opportunities are provided overall for pupils to investigate, make predictions and solve problems for themselves. This slows down the progress made by pupils of all abilities, especially higher attaining pupils. Too many poor quality worksheets are used in one Year 4 class. These do not promote pupils' thinking in science enough and prevent pupils from recording investigations like scientists. They slow down the progress made by average and higher attaining pupils in particular. A more general weakness is that not enough opportunities are provided to use computers in science.
113. The science co-ordinator has taken over responsibility for the subject during the past 12 months. Since then, she has made a significant impact on the school's provision. The policy has been reviewed and the nationally recommended scheme of work for science has been adopted. Each year group has been provided with a programme of work and supporting documentation. Resources have been purchased to implement the new scheme of work. The co-ordinator has monitored teachers' plans and pupils' work in all year groups to ensure the new scheme is being taught. From this, the school's strengths and weaknesses in science have been identified. The weaknesses have been framed into an initiative for the forthcoming school development plan. All this is excellent practice. Feedback to each teacher as a result of the monitoring that has taken place has not yet occurred. The co-ordinator has not yet monitored the teaching.

ART AND DESIGN

114. By the time they leave the school, most pupils attain and a significant proportion exceeds the nationally expected standards in art and design. Standards attained by most 7-year-old pupils are average for their age. Pupils make sound progress in art and design in Years 1 and 2 and good progress in Years 3 to 6. This is a similar picture to that at the last inspection.
115. Pupils in Year 6 are learning techniques in art and design that show movement. In one lesson, some pupils with special educational needs managed this task better than most other pupils in the class. For instance, one pupil with special educational needs designed a dolphin template for her work, drew round this template a number of times and painted the dolphin leaping out of and landing back in the sea by gradually darkening the colour on each of the dolphins she had drawn. Two pupils used a computer skilfully to produce a shooting star in the sky. The teacher helped them manage the computer programs, but the pupils created the effect of movement effectively by progressively darkening the colour. Year 6 pupils know how to work effectively using pastels. Some of the firework pictures are very impressive and indicate they have been designed thoughtfully with good co-ordination and control. Computers have been used effectively to produce posters about firework safety. Year 5 pupils understand how to shade drawings using pencils because the teacher captured their interest and imagination through a step by step exploration of the use of different sorts of pencils to produce quite dramatic effects in their

drawings. During the inspection, they evaluated each other's still life drawings in black and white and recognised the beneficial effects of shading on each other's work. Painting in the style of famous artists is a particular strength of the school. For instance, there are a number of good quality displays in corridors and in the library reflecting the work of artists such as Monet, Picasso, Cezanne, Millais and Van Gogh. Much of this work was completed during the Arts' Week held in 2001. The impact this week had on the quality of artwork produced by pupils was significant.

116. Pupils in Year 2 are learning how to design their work before carrying it out. For instance, they sketched out a winter scene in their sketchbooks before creating a winter collage using cotton wool, sticks and paint. Many of these scenes show good understanding of a landscape scene in winter. They include an appropriate background colourwash and indicate appropriate control and co-ordination of tools and materials for the pupils' age. The work these pupils have completed on designed and making winter clothes for paper cut out children also illustrates this point. Year 2 pupils have also produced some good observational paintings in the style of Lowry.
117. The quality of teaching in art and design is good throughout the school. This is similar to that found at the last inspection. There are a number of particular strengths in the teaching of art and design. Most teachers teach the basic skills of art and design very well. For instance, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of designing prior to creating a picture. Teachers spend time teaching pupils how to use pencils correctly to create the best effect. They teach pupils the techniques of creating movement in art carefully and at levels the pupils can understand. Art is well resourced so teachers can use a variety of materials in their teaching. Pupils are very well managed in art lessons. They are keen and enthusiastic about art and they want to do well in lessons. They speak with pride about their work, especially if it is on display in the school. Overall, teachers have a good level of expertise in art, especially when they are linking artwork to work in other subjects. For instance, art was linked to mathematics in Year 6 when they were learning about tessellations and there are some links between computers and art. However, some teachers are not confident in teaching specialist techniques such as printing with silk screens. Some teachers do not use the computer enough in art and design lessons because of their lack of knowledge in this area.
118. The school has applied for an Arts Mark. This is national recognition for excellence in art teaching. The outcome of this is not yet known. The co-ordinator has led an art club in recent years. This has not taken place this school year. There has not been any systematic monitoring and evaluation of standards and teaching of art. The co-ordinator sees teachers' plans for art and design, but does not evaluate and comment on these plans.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

119. No lessons were observed in design and technology during the inspection. There was not enough evidence from pupils' work or from conversations with pupils to form robust judgements about standards being attained by pupils in lessons or the quality of teaching. From the evidence available, it is clear that the school has not been implementing fully the National Curriculum programme of study for design and technology since the last inspection. Because of this, pupils have not been taught systematically the knowledge, understanding and skills of design and technology. As a consequence, standards of achievement are below average throughout the school. This is a similar picture as that found at the last inspection.
120. Since the appointment of a new co-ordinator for design and technology six months ago, the school has produced a useful scheme of work for the subject. This provides a clear direction for teachers. It is based on national guidance and includes all aspects of the

National Curriculum programme of study for the subject. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has identified strengths and weaknesses within design and technology and has drawn up a plan of action to improve on the weaknesses. This is good practice. A key issue for the school to tackle is to increase teachers' expertise in teaching design and technology. For instance, much of the work in food technology does not promote enough learning in design and technology. The scheme of work is not yet fully resourced. For example, there are not enough materials for construction. There is a limited range of tools available, such as craft knives and saws, and there is a shortage of software to link computer skills to design and technology. At present, computers are not used in design and technology.

121. Pupils in Years 3 and 5 have tested the strength of different types of paper such as normal paper, corrugated paper and reinforced paper. They planned how to carry out this task, predicted the outcomes and drew conclusions for their test experiments. Year 4 pupils are carrying out a project on torches. They have produced an initial design and a final design and now they are ready to plan what they are going to do to make a torch. Some good work in design and technology has been completed in Year 5. These pupils examined how carrier bags were constructed and designed and made a carrier bag of their own suitable to carry a specific item. Some of these bags are very impressive and reflect the skilful teaching that has taken place during this design and make task. A number of Year 5 and 6 pupils attend a design and technology club each week. This is organised and run by the co-ordinator for design and technology. The pupils attending speak with enthusiasm about what they are working on in this club. Activities for this club are planned in detail by the co-ordinator and represent a very useful supplement to the National Curriculum programme of study. There is a significant amount of evidence in the displays around school of work with a variety of textiles, combining the use of thread with cloth. These displays are colourful and pleasing to the eye and pupils speak about them with pride. However, there was no evidence available at the time of the inspection to indicate that these displays have been planned by the pupils or evaluated by them following design and technology principles.

GEOGRAPHY

122. There was no geography being taught in Years 4 to 6 during the inspection. Only one infant lesson was observed and this was very good. Information gleaned from pupils' books for Years 1 to 6 show that little geography has been taught since in the first half of the school year. Therefore, there was not sufficient evidence to judge teaching in the subject.
123. The standard of the work completed by 5 to 11-year-old pupils so far is satisfactory, but it covers only a small proportion of the National Curriculum requirements. The small amount of geography covered by all classes means that the overall standards of geographical knowledge and understanding are below that expected for pupils in any primary school year group. Standards at the time of the last inspection were in line with that expected for primary aged pupils.
124. Infant pupils know the four countries of the United Kingdom and their capital cities. They have successfully started to use four figure grid references and ably describe places in relation to other places. A good feature of the teaching is that pupils of different abilities have work that is matched to their learning needs. However, there is nothing that shows pupils having to think about what they like in the area in which they live, what might be changed and how at least one other place differs from their own. The Year 2 lesson shows that pupils are interested in places. In their lesson their eyes were fixed on the parcel that the teacher had received and had started opening, 'what is in the parcel?' The pupils were captivated and as the contents were removed they learnt more and more about the place that it came from. The parcel had plenty of clues about the city that it was

from. Pupils later used brochures to identify, categorise and sort places into the seaside, the countryside and cities and towns. They worked very well together in small groups, talking and making suggestions as they successfully identified the right clues to help prove they knew and were learning more about the three different types of places.

125. Pupils between the ages of 7 and 11 did more worksheet and atlas tasks to reinforce their knowledge of the location of places in the United Kingdom and by 11 most can correctly name and locate some of the places frequently in the news. Year 6 pupils show that they understand four-figure grid references, can correctly use a key on a map and know some basic features along the course of a river. A small number of pupils are working towards the National Curriculum level expected for their age.
126. A major reason for the lack of breadth and depth to the geographical work completed in the school is the low status of the subject. A significant proportion of geographical work is covered through other work in the school, for example history topics about ancient Greece or Egypt, the environmental work done by pupils and the trips that pupils attend, especially the residential trips. The co-ordinator has recently, however, provided guidance to all teachers so that a good plan covering all key features of the National Curriculum is now in place. This plan shows that geography should now be taught in a way that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and builds pupils knowledge and understanding of their world term by term. It has yet to be included in all teachers' timetables.

HISTORY

127. By the time pupils are 7 their standards of attainment are above expectations. They showed this, for example, when involved in good quality discussions and activities about the Victorian period. These pupils show good understanding of events in the past, such as changes in fashion and the use of black and white photographic prints as opposed to those which exist today. The pupils have a good range of historical vocabulary. The older pupils pay attention for long periods of time and contribute with interest and success to discussions. Younger pupils are not exposed to a wide enough range of resources to develop their skills in history.
128. Pupils make satisfactory progress through the junior years and by the age of 11 standards are similar to the time of the last inspection in that they are above that expected for their age. There is particularly good understanding of chronology in Year 5. For example, pupils know that the Victorian period comes after the Tudor period. These pupils also show good skills of judgement and understand the contribution that historical events have on what happens today. In a younger year group much of what pupils learn arises from worksheets, is factual and lacks the opportunity for pupils to think about and try to interpret historical information.
129. Work is well presented in all classes and includes different types and lengths of writing, drawings, using pictures, maps and other ways to record information. Boys and girls take equal parts in discussion and pupils with special educational needs are well catered for. It is clear that pupils enjoy their history.
130. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is good overall and very good in Year 2. It is well prepared throughout the infant years. In Year 2 the teacher uses examples from her childhood to compare life now and then. This helps to raise the interest level shown by the pupils. This teacher shows good use of visual aids such as photographs and, for example, a seashell to successfully promote discussion about the seaside in Victorian times. She also uses a very good selection of old photographs that enhance the quality of historical discussion. In Years 1 and 2, progress within the lessons is satisfactory overall and good in Year 2 where a deeper understanding of changing fashions is evident in lessons. In Year 1 there is good development of language skills. For example, there are references to 'gates' and

'drawbridges' in Year 1 discussions about castles. There is also the use of 'My World' to help pupils to investigate ideas about the layout of Roman rooms. There are further links with writing skills when older pupils are encouraged to use bullet points for note taking.

131. In Years 3 to 6 the teaching is good overall and tasks are explained clearly to pupils. In a very good Year 5 lesson, as well as giving the pupils regular praise, the teacher made constant references to the use of evidence when making judgements about life in Victorian times and now. Pupils were encouraged to look for similarities and differences. There were also inferences as to what would happen today. The pupils' work involved the use of good resources and good guidance by the teacher to get the pupils thinking, asking questions and recording information in note form about Victorian life. The teacher was highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic. This and her sharp questioning and well designed tasks inspired pupils so that they were keen to take part in the lesson, alert and clearly enjoying learning about history. In another junior lesson the teacher showed consideration to pupils with special educational needs and focused attention on them in the activities, but the teaching fails to focus on historical investigation.
132. An enthusiastic teacher is responsible for the co-ordination of the subject throughout the school. There is a good, clear policy that includes the aims of teaching history as well as guidance on equal opportunities and there is a wide range of good quality resources. The school uses computers well to enhance the learning of pupils. History has a high profile in the school and this leads to pupils having a high awareness of the subject. A history club is led by a volunteer and supported by the co-ordinator. There are a variety of outside school visits, the most recent being a trip to the military museum and a canal visit is planned for the near future. However, the co-ordinator has little opportunity to influence, monitor or assess the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. School based training is raised as an issue in the school development plan in order to raise standards. The school is a 'Young Historian's School' because of the good quality work in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

133. Six lessons involving the use of computers were observed during the inspection. Computers were used less often when teaching other subjects in classrooms rather than the computer suite. The evaluation of standards is based also upon scrutiny of previous work and discussions with teachers and pupils.
134. Standards are below average by the age of 7 and average by the age of 11 years. This is an improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection when standards were below average throughout the school. In Years 1 and 2, pupils have limited opportunities to use computers. In Year 2, they write simple sentences such as '*We are playing on the computer*' or '*The boy is playing football*'. The most able write four or five sentences in a lesson using word-processing software. The least able only manage one or two. This under-achievement is borne out in examples of work produced in previous lessons, where pupils have copied out simple sentences such as '*The big, brown dog is rolling in the dirt*'. Some more interesting work has been done using numeracy-based software, which pupils have printed out, but it was unnamed, undated and not marked by the teacher. Pupils are learning how to change the size and style of fonts and how to save their work for future use and some can print it out. They have produced pictures using an art package. Pupils in the infant years are not appropriately challenged in lessons.
135. In Years 3 to 6, pupils develop their skills further. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 can input commands to make a screen 'turtle' follow a certain path. Pupils use embedded software such as 'clip art' to enhance the appearance of their work. Many pupils have not yet had sufficient experience of using computers to present work which shows an awareness of the intended audience. Pupils in the junior years have average attainments

- in using the computer to control devices. They have learned commands such as lift, drop, right, left, clear memory, forward and back. They have a limited understanding of the relevance of computer control commands to the mathematical skills of estimating and measuring because lessons do not focus sharply enough on these aspects.
136. The range of printed work in Year 4 shows that pupils have had a series of good opportunities to use computers. These include using art programs to produce multi-coloured patterned paintings and in mathematics the production of three-dimensional block graphs and three- and two-dimensional pie-charts. Pupils' control programs contain up to 27 separate commands in a sequence, showing that they are gaining skill in using appropriate software. These sequences were not, though, developed into programs with repeating command-loops. Pupils have used computers in subjects such as history - to produce diagrams of the cross-section of a Roman road - but not for research using digital encyclopaedias.
 137. Many pupils are not able to frame questions, select information or use facilities such as a web 'browser' on the Internet appropriately. Pupils in Year 5 are able to combine the information found from different sources, such as an encyclopaedia and a publishing program. By Year 5, pupils have gained some fluency in the basics of information and communication technology, such as opening and saving files, and in using peripheral devices such as the mouse, the keyboard and the printer. They have also developed their mathematical knowledge further through work on analogue and digital clocks using an adapted software program.
 138. The highest standards are achieved in Year 6, where they are average. Pupils have used a database program to create a digital questionnaire, combined text and images using a publishing program, worked on the Internet using the Birmingham Grid for learning (BGfL), used palmtop computers on educational visits and word processed their work in English lessons. They have not, though, used spreadsheets to a sufficient degree. Two laminated booklets of an educational visit to Northumbria were well presented with an attractive front cover, a contents page, chapters and a conclusion. Pupils had combined text, photographs and cartoon images effectively. Although their work had many grammatical and spelling errors, it showed that pupils have used computers to communicate their thoughts in a strong and clear way. Those who have developed some adeptness at using the Internet have usually done so by using the computers they have at home. That said, Year 6 pupils in 2000 used electronic mail to establish links with a school in America. Pupils with special educational needs achieve soundly relative to their age and abilities and are supported by teachers who use a specially dedicated computer in the library.
 139. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning in information and communication technology is good in Year 5 and Year 6 and satisfactory in other classes. When teachers use the computer suite, teaching is at least satisfactory and is sometimes good, but the single computer in classrooms is rarely used. Teachers are introducing more challenge into their information and communication technology lessons, but do not yet use more-able pupils to help others gain skills. The acting headteacher has personally supported colleagues by team-teaching in information and communication technology lessons over the last few terms and this is increasing their knowledge and confidence.
 140. The school has a good policy in place. Teachers use the nationally produced scheme of work to guide their teaching, but have not yet adapted the scheme enough to the needs of pupils. Assessment procedures are not used and teachers cannot, therefore, amend planning in the light of such assessment. Pupils' use of computers has been dependent upon the computer knowledge of their class teacher. Most teachers have lacked sufficient subject knowledge to enable pupils to learn effectively. No teachers have yet reached the bronze level of the government-funded in-service training programme. The acting

headteacher ran a series of useful workshops last term to address this issue. An after-school computer club has been run in recent years, but has stopped this term because of the acting headteacher's increased commitments in leading and managing the school.

141. The school has improved its resources dramatically in the last two years and is now set to develop the curriculum further in this area over the next year. There are enough up-to-date computers to enable effective group teaching. The ratio of good-quality computers to pupils is now favourable, but had been well below average from 1997 until 2000. Pupils in Year 6 have produced some web pages, but a school web-site has not yet been set up, although suitable textbooks are in use. Pupils are given some protection from the dangers of the Internet through the software architecture installed by school. The co-ordinator has instituted an 'Acceptable Use of the Internet' policy.
142. There is sound subject leadership from a co-ordinator who is seeking to increase the use of computers in both information and communication technology lessons and in other subjects. Monitoring of standards has been satisfactory. This is helping to establish a clear educational direction for information and communication technology. The lack of teacher confidence in some aspects of information and communication technology has been identified and the school recognises the need to improve teachers' subject knowledge.

MUSIC

143. Most pupils attain standards that are below national expectations by the time they are 7 and also by the time they leave school aged 11 because music is not taught for long enough from Year 1 to Year 3 and in Years 5 and 6. The school has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection when standards were judged to be in line with expectations. Pupils in Year 4 achieve well because they regularly have good specialist teaching from peripatetic musicians.
144. Years 4 and 5 classes are taught to play the recorder by a peripatetic teacher in a programme that was started at the beginning of the autumn term 2001. Extra-curricular provision is very good and this enhances the quality of opportunities available for pupils. The standards achieved by most of these pupils in the school across a range of extra-curricular sessions are above average. Groups of these pupils, for example, are taught to play the violin by the Suzuki method, the clarinet, keyboards, flute, recorder and percussion. About 37 pupils have been involved in the school choir's musical productions arranged for the end of the autumn and summer terms.
145. In the one music lesson observed, where a Year 4 class was taught to play the recorder, all pupils played with some skill. They played in harmony together, with a good sense of timing. They were also able to play in the round, and in three-part harmony, songs such as 'The Grand Old Duke of York' and 'Pease Pudding Hot'. They were not so adept at appraising their performances because the opportunities for this were too few. In another peripatetic session, a small group of pupils attained quite well in playing electronic keyboards.
146. Because so little music was taught during the inspection it is not possible to evaluate standards in singing, in pupils' understanding of musical terms and vocabulary, in aspects of performance such as timing and tempo, or in reading music. There was no evidence to suggest that pupils have much knowledge about famous composers of music such as Chopin, Beethoven or Mozart.
147. Due to the low number of lessons seen, it is not possible to judge the quality of teaching. The teaching is very good in voluntary lunchtime rehearsals for violin players in Year 1 as well as in the teaching of the recorder, the clarinet and keyboards. Assessment

procedures are not rigorous and do not provide a sufficient basis on which to monitor pupils' progress. However, when given the opportunity, pupils enjoy music. They listen intently. They take care of the instruments. They also work well with each other.

148. The school uses the nationally recognised scheme of work in conjunction with a commercial scheme, but there is no linkage between the programme for instrumental tuition and for the provision for National Curriculum music. This impedes attainment for most pupils. The subject leader has good subject knowledge, but the school does not have sufficient systems in place to enable her to influence planning, teaching or assessment enough.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

149. Standards are level with those expected for primary aged pupils. Boys and girls achieve equally well, as do those pupils with special educational needs. Standards are similar to those during the last inspection.
150. Pupils in the infant years are excited about their physical education lessons. They quickly change in their classroom and walk in a very orderly way to the hall. Pupils are keen to listen and get absorbed in the activities planned for them. Teachers are very mindful of health and safety. Their instructions about moving small equipment are clear and repeated where necessary. They let pupils know why warming up activities are essential and why they finish with a calming or cooling down activity. Pupils successfully practice throwing and catching a ball. During the lesson different size balls are used and pupils are asked why one may be easier to throw or catch over another. Most able pupils successfully throw a ball with one hand and catch with the other. In another class, pupils were taught the routines of a traditional dance. The teacher emphasised movement to a beat of eight and her constant guidance helped pupils to start with the right rhythm and improve upon it during the lesson. By the end of the lesson, pupils showed that they had remembered a complex sequence of movements, responded correctly with their partner and performed well as a whole group. Boys and girls worked very well together and the way in which the teacher built up the sequence of movements ensured that all pupils were always involved. Teaching is good and well focused as is the support from classroom assistants who work well with all pupils.
151. Pupils in different junior years experienced dance, gymnastics and games during the inspection. The very good planning and teaching by all teachers ensured that instructions were clear to pupils and they responded very well and always with interest and enthusiasm. In all lessons different skills are taught, practised and briefly evaluated to help pupils refine and develop their skills. Pupils showed increasing enjoyment because they could see that they were improving their performance and this gave them a sense of pride in what they were doing. Teachers' are totally focused on the pupils' performances. They watch and comment frequently on pupils' actions, which has the effect of boosting pupils' confidence so they try harder and succeed. For example, in a Year 3 lesson the teacher quickly got pupils to realise that a two hand push pass from the chest could be directed more easily to a partner and would travel faster than other forms of passing. Very good teaching ensured that this was practised and pupils got a sense of enjoyment and achievement from working on this skill. Such lessons also move forward at a very good pace. Other very good examples included pupils who were trying to get inside the mind of a character they are studying in English and then, through very good teaching, produce movements while in role to a piece of music. In another lesson, pupils were highly responsive to working on mats and benches and during the course of the lesson their body shapes and subsequent ability to balance improved. In all lessons the social, caring and co-operative values of the school are reinforced and pupils are highly responsive. They enjoy their physical education lessons and take part with enthusiasm and a desire to be involved and improve.

152. Physical education is led and co-ordinated by an enthusiastic and well-qualified teacher. In the very short period of time she has had responsibility for the subject she has improved the existing good level of resources and has produced a clear and attainable action plan for the forthcoming year. A very impressive high quality scheme of work for all teachers has been prepared. The scheme of work provides all teachers with an in-depth guide on the activities, skills and resources required to meet the aims of the many elements of National Curriculum physical education. It can be seen that this is having a strong impact on the level of enjoyment and standards of physical education throughout the school. However, there is one class that does not have physical education in its weekly timetable. In a similar way to some other subjects, the co-ordinator does not have enough opportunities to enable her to sufficiently influence planning or teaching of physical education. Very good internal accommodation is available for physical education, one specialist hall and a second large hall; however, there is no on site playing field. Swimming is an important additional feature of the school physical education programme in which all pupils are taught to swim and improve their skills of swimming including an understanding of water safety. Nearly all pupils can swim 25 metres before they leave school. There are several after school physical education clubs run for pupils throughout the year in which they enjoy taking part.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

153. Only three lessons were observed during the inspection. Many classes are taught this subject through 'candle time' at the start of morning or afternoon sessions, which also is used for class assemblies. Since this is very rarely more than 30 minutes, it places a severe restriction on what can be taught or learned. As a result, most pupils attain below average standards by the age of 7 and 11. Many develop a good understanding of facets of Christianity, but are not so aware of other world faiths. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with an minority ethnic background, make unsatisfactory progress in their learning. The school has made unsatisfactory progress in that standards are worse than in the last inspection.
154. In studies of the Christian faith, Year 2 pupils are able to say that Christians are baptised '*because it makes us part of God's family*'. In a very good lesson in Year 4, pupils learned much about the Christian period of Lent. They could name Peter, John and Paul as three of the disciples. Pupils recognised that Christians want to help the communities they live amongst. They could also identify Pancake Day as Shrove Tuesday, which is followed by Ash Wednesday, '*the day that Jesus went into the desert to fast*'. They suggested that Christians would want to give up things such as smoking, eating sweets and gambling for Lent. In a good Year 5 lesson, pupils developed their vocabulary in lessons and knew that *poverty* means *being poor* and *unemployed* means *not having a job*. Many pupils were able to reflect upon how they could be Christian by being fair, friendly and by treating others as you would want to be treated. In written portfolios, most of the work is about Christianity, but some good, informational writing has been produced on the festival of light or Diwali. This, though, had little individual colour, and appeared to have been copied from another source. The work is well presented, but too teacher-directed. There is little evidence of pupils having the opportunity to consider in writing their reactions to the world or to different faiths.
155. That said, in an excellent Year 6 'candle time', pupils had rich opportunities to reflect spiritually in discussion as well as in prayer. Pupils were presented with the issues arising from giving charity to others. Through dynamic and charismatic teaching they learned that they could make a difference in the world and in their community.
156. Pupils' attitudes to learning are usually very good, as is their behaviour. They are often keen to listen to their teachers and respond very well to opportunities to learn more. Their

very good attitudes are exemplified in the way they show kindness and thoughtfulness to their peers, teachers and visitors to the school in an unprompted and genuine way.

157. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory within the confines of timetabling that often restricts what can be taught or learned. Occasionally, teaching is very good (in Year 5) or excellent (in Year 6). Where teaching is effective, it is because lessons are well organised and teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject. Teachers help pupils to reflect upon life and to develop a greater self-knowledge. Because teachers read stories and parables with vivacity, pupils become more interested and listen with care. Teachers sometimes use aspects of English teaching well, such as writing frames, but the focus on literacy is not sharp enough. Pupils are given time for quiet thought and prayer in assemblies and are helped in this through the playing of reflective, classical music. During such times pupils come to terms with themselves, with their beliefs, their feelings and their aspirations. Teachers have taken pupils to visit a Rabbi to talk about Judaism and visits to other places of worship are being arranged.
158. The school uses aspects of the national scheme of work coupled with the locally agreed syllabus to provide some basis for planning. This, however, does not provide teachers with enough guidance on planning, teaching or assessment. A new system for assessment is currently being reviewed, but there are very few assessment procedures in place now. Little has been done to monitor or evaluate the teaching of religious education. World faiths such as Judaism, Islam or Hinduism are not taught in sufficient depth. The artefacts used to assist religious education are satisfactory. The strongest element of the school's provision for religious education and spiritual development is in the way many teachers and pupils show a quiet respect for each other. This is a visible part of the life of the school. For example, acts of worship make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. The acting headteacher and his colleagues actively promote the value of caring for others and celebrating achievement. They help pupils to feel part of the school family in an inclusive way. This is particularly evident in the way the school has successfully included and catered for the needs of pupils with severe physical disabilities for many years of their education. The school's involvement in many award schemes and educational visits to places near and far away make a positive contribution towards pupils' knowledge of and respect for Britain's cultural diversity.