

INSPECTION REPORT

ALLENS CROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Kings Heath, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103243

Headteacher: Mrs S Walton

Reporting inspector: Mrs S E Hall
21750

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th December 2001

Inspection number: 230847

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Allens Croft Road Kings Heath Birmingham
Postcode:	B14 6RP
Telephone number:	0121 444 2611
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs E Smith
Date of previous inspection:	July 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21750	Mrs S E Hall	Registered inspector	Geography History	The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What could the school do to improve further?
10478	Mrs A Smith	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and values How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
26405	Mrs C Bond	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology The Foundation Stage English as an additional language	
12172	Mrs W Knight	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15223	Mr R Salt	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Religious education	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Allens Croft Primary School is in Kings Heath, Birmingham. The school is slightly smaller than average with 190 pupils aged from four to eleven. Currently 125 pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. 145 pupils are of white ethnic heritage. The remaining pupils are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. A relatively high proportion of these pupils (20) are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Many of these pupils are recent arrivals. There are 78 pupils on the school's special educational needs register, which is above average, and there are four pupils with statements of special educational need, which is average. Allens Croft is part of an urban regeneration programme. Many families experience social and economic difficulties. There is a high level of movement in and out of the area with almost one third of pupils in some classes having changed school recently. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average, especially in the vital areas of language and mathematical development.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a caring and very supportive school where the raising of self-esteem is paramount. Inspection findings are that standards in the main subject areas are below average at the age of seven and eleven, but have recently risen markedly. Teaching is satisfactory overall and there is much teaching that is good. The overall quality of leadership and management is good with some aspects that are excellent. Whilst expenditure for each pupil is currently extremely high the school is successful in raising achievement and self-confidence and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are excellent.
- The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills.
- The pastoral care of pupils is very good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities includes a wide range of projects and activities and is very good.
- The quality of teaching for children in the Foundation Stage is good, as is the management of pupils throughout the school.
- Parents' views of the school are extremely positive.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics, science, information and communications technology (ICT) and music.
- The quality of planning and teaching in order to meet the needs of different groups of pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection in July 1998. At that stage the headteacher was new to the school. Following the inspection, senior staff, teachers and governors worked hard to achieve improvement. The pace of change has quickened recently and this has resulted in an improvement in standards in English, mathematics, science, and design and technology. In 2001 standards improved considerably and the school was amongst the top one hundred most improved schools in the country. Effective staff training has improved the teaching of literacy and numeracy, particularly for the youngest pupils. The marking policy has improved day-to-day assessment. Staff are effectively deployed and take greater responsibility for teaching and planning. Staff have also benefited from training in science and design and technology. The increasing staff expertise has enabled all pupils to be supported effectively. However, there has not been enough improvement in the outdoor facilities for children in the reception class. Whilst attendance rates are still poor there has been a slow but generally satisfactory increase in parents' involvement in children's learning.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
lowest 5% of schools	E*

Pupils' attainment at the age of seven and eleven has been very low over several years and regularly in the lowest 5% of schools nationally in English, mathematics and science. However, slowly standards have risen in both key stages from the lowest point in 1998. The scores in national tests have risen from 75 points in 1998, to 216 points in 2001. Standards for pupils' aged 11 in 2001, although well below the national average in English and mathematics, were average when compared to schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals. Standards in science were better and well above the average of similar schools, because of pupils' improved knowledge of scientific facts. Standards for pupils aged seven have shown a similar picture. Reading has been a major area of weakness over many years and one that has proved stubbornly difficult for the school to improve. In the 2001 national tests attainment in reading was amongst the lowest 5% of schools nationally and well below the standards in similar schools. However, more than double the number of pupils reached the required standard in writing than in 2000 because the school put a big emphasis on teaching the basic skills of spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Standards in mathematics were average compared with all schools and well above the average of schools with similar characteristics because the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well. General improvements have been brought about in both key stages by good preparation for national tests.

The school's declared targets in 2001 for 40% - 50% of pupils aged eleven to achieve the expected level in English were slightly exceeded as was the target for 50% - 60% to achieve the level in mathematics. Similar targets for 2002 are very challenging for the group of pupils. Inspection judgements reflect the school's own assessment information that the current groups of pupils in Year 6 and Year 2 have a high proportion with special educational needs who may not achieve the national standard by the end of the year. Standards are currently below average in English, mathematics, science, ICT and music at both key stages but are average in other subjects including religious education. There is high pupil mobility within some year groups and several pupils have recently arrived in the country and are at the early stages of learning English. Children enter the school at the age of four with attainment that is well below that expected for this age in most areas of their learning. They make good progress in the reception class but nevertheless they enter Year 1 with attainment well below average, particularly in language and mathematics.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. The majority have positive attitudes to their learning and an interest and involvement in activities.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Most pupils behave well. The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, particularly boys, is unsatisfactory and affects the learning of other pupils.
Personal development and relationships	The personal development of pupils is satisfactory, although opportunities to develop initiative and solve problems are limited. The relationships between most pupils are satisfactory and many are good.
Attendance	Poor. A significant number of pupils do not attend school regularly and some do not arrive punctually. This affects the quality of their learning and the progress made.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and there is much teaching that is good. However, over a longer period of time pupils often make good progress and most achieve as well as they can. The quality of teaching in the reception class is consistently good and enables the youngest pupils to settle well and develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils in Year 2 and some in Year 6 learn well and make good progress because of consistently good teaching. A strength throughout the school is in the good management of pupils, which ensures most lessons are conducted in an orderly and purposeful manner. The teaching of English is good in Key Stage 1 as it is in mathematics throughout the school. Teaching meets the needs of the majority of pupils appropriately. However, the planning for all pupils in a class in some subjects is the same or very similar and does not always offer a high level of challenge for pupils with above average attainment. Occasionally girls are not encouraged to contribute to lessons as fully as boys are.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is a broad and balanced curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage. But the time allocations for non-core subjects are variable in the rest of the school and not always sufficient to teach the full curriculum. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good and the social and educational inclusion of pupils is generally appropriate.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The planning and provision for pupils with special needs is sound and enables them to have access to the curriculum at a level that is appropriate to their needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Staff, including the support assistant with school based responsibility, work hard to support the development of pupils in the range of subjects. But the number of hours of direct support to pupils is insufficient and there is no teacher with responsibility for this area.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent and that for moral development is very good. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong and the value of establishing a set of rules and principles in order to make choices in their lives.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pastoral support is very good and the school cares for its pupils well. Assessment procedures are good and the use of assessment information to plan lessons and identify small-scale targets for improvement is satisfactory.

Parents have very positive views of the school and are appreciative of the quality of care provided. However, few actively support the work of the school and the contribution of parents to children's learning at school and home is very limited.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The commitment of the headteacher to the pupils and community has been pivotal to the development of the school. The senior management team ably supports her in strategic development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are very supportive of the school. They are well led, meet the legal requirements placed upon them, and are beginning to develop their involvement in monitoring and in curriculum matters.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school diagnoses its strengths and areas for development well. The monitoring and evaluation of standards in core subjects of the curriculum is efficient and effective, but that for other subjects and areas of the school's work is less rigorous or purposeful.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school makes excellent use of specific grants to support a range of projects. The school applies the principles of best value to purchases and has an outstanding resource for pupils and families in the development of the 'Aztec Room'.

There is a suitable number of class teachers and the accommodation is used effectively but the school dining room is in a poor state. There is no specific outdoor play area for children in the Foundation Stage. Resources are satisfactory although there are shortfalls in some subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That there is strong leadership and that staff are friendly and helpful. • The range of opportunities offered. • Children's efforts are valued. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistent use of homework and extra-curricular activities. • More information about the work children do and the progress made.

Inspectors agree that there is strong leadership of the school and that staff are friendly, supportive and value the efforts of the pupils. Whilst the use of homework is satisfactory, more could be done to extend the consistency of such arrangements and to encourage parents to support homework.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Children enter the reception class with attainment that is often well below what is expected of most four-year-olds. Particularly weak areas are the skills of communication, language and literacy and this affects the progress made in all other subjects. Children in the reception class currently make good, and sometimes very good progress because of the consistently good quality of teaching. These children achieve well. They are expected to achieve the Early Learning Goals¹ in their physical, creative and personal development, but on entry to Year 1, attainment is still well below expectations in the areas of language, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world.

2 The previous inspection of the school in 1998 identified that standards were below national expectations in several subjects in both key stages. This was the main key issue for improvement. The previous inspection judgements were largely reflected in the subsequent National Curriculum tests for pupils aged seven and eleven. In the tests in 1998 and in 1999 attainment in English, mathematics and science was well below average and amongst the lowest five per cent of schools in the country.

3 Because standards were so low at the time of the previous inspection and other schools have also continued to improve, it has taken some time for the school to narrow the gap between what pupils achieve at Allens Croft and the standards achieved nationally. Since 1999 standards have begun to gradually rise in each subject, with considerable improvement in 2000 and even better improvement in 2001. This is largely because the headteacher and the staff have worked with diligence and commitment to the pupils to improve planning, teaching and learning. More has been expected of the pupils and most have lived up to the demands placed upon them by their teachers. In the last two years the very thorough programme of support and revision for national tests has been extremely effective. This has boosted the progress pupils make, especially in writing, and in enabling them to attain standards in tests that were previously thought to be unattainable.

4 Of considerable importance in bringing about the recent improvements has been the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, which have brought structure to planning and teaching. Improvements have been reflected in the trend in the average National Curriculum points for this school in all core subjects, which was above the national trend. These improvements were shown in the aggregated national test scores for pupils aged eleven, which increased from 75 points in 1998 to 216 points in 2001. Such improvements were recognised during the inspection with the announcement that the school was amongst the 100 most improved schools in the country. However, this term there have been a number of staff changes with staff new to the school who are still settling into the demands of planning and pupil management.

5 Inspection judgements are that, despite recent improvements, current standards in Years 2 and 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science. These judgements do not fully reflect the most recent national test results and teacher assessments. These showed that standards in English were well below the national average in both key stages. In mathematics they were average at Key Stage 1 and well below average in Key Stage 2 and in science were well below average at seven but average at eleven. These varying results reflect the make-up of the classes year-on-year and the effect that one pupil in a small cohort

¹ The standards that most children should reach by the end of the reception year.

can have on results. In 2001, for example, only 18 pupils took the Key Stage 1 tests and the performance of one can affect the results by 5 per cent. The number of pupils who do not use English as their first language or who have special educational needs or whom experience education in a number of schools also affects results. The school's targets in 2001 for 40-50 per cent of pupils aged eleven to achieve the expected level in English were exceeded slightly as was the target for 50-60 per cent to achieve the level in mathematics. Similar targets for 2002 are very challenging for the particular group of pupils.

6 The large majority of pupils throughout the school make satisfactory gains in their learning and a good number of pupils make good progress. Over time those pupils who are settled in school often make good progress and achieve as well as they might. But standards are considerably affected by the high mobility in the area. Information shows that, for instance, in one of the current Year 6 groups only four of the 19 pupils have attended one school. Some pupils have had several changes of school and this affects the quality of their learning and sometimes unsettles the pupils, leading to behaviour that can be challenging.

7 Standards for pupils aged seven in national tests in 2001 showed that, whilst improved slightly, standards in reading were still in the lowest five per cent of schools in the country. Standards also remained stubbornly well below the average of schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals. Limited reading skills have an adverse effect to standards in all other subjects when pupils struggle to read the information that is available to them. Unusually, standards in recent national tests in writing at the age of seven have been above those in reading. This is mainly because in 2001 the school paid particular attention to the improvement of writing through a whole school focus on teaching the necessary skills of grammar, spelling and handwriting. The effectiveness of this specific focus was seen when standards of writing were average in comparison to schools with similar characteristics.

8 In 2001 standards in English for pupils aged eleven overall also remained well below the national average but showed improvement when compared to similar schools with standards being average. Whilst there are no national tests to assess the quality of pupils' speaking and listening skills staff note, and inspectors agree, that standards in speaking are low. Pupils throughout the school often have only a limited vocabulary and many speak in short phrases or sentences that are not grammatically accurate, but most pupils listen and react appropriately. Whilst the school is wholeheartedly in support of the educational inclusion of pupils, some older boys dominate lessons and this is a matter of concern. Many pupils, and especially girls, are very passive in class; they offer little to discussions and therefore do not improve their technical vocabulary very well.

9 Overall improvement has been more marked in other subjects including mathematics and science. In national tests in both 2000 and 2001 standards in mathematics were average in national comparisons but were generally above those in English. In 2001, standards in the infants rose considerably and were well above the average for schools with similar numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals. Standards in the juniors were average when compared to similar schools although they were well below average nationally. These improvements have largely been brought about by the good implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and good quality teaching. The majority of pupils have a reasonable grasp of number, shape and measures, although many struggle to use what they know when solving problems. Pupils often do not have the confidence or skills to work through problems applying what they already know to new tasks.

10 Teacher assessment in science at the age of seven in 2000 indicated the number of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 to be well below the national average, especially in their understanding of physical processes. In 2001 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard improved. However, pupils aged eleven in 2001 did considerably better in science

than English and mathematics with everyone achieving the expected Level 4. Standards were average in comparison to schools nationally and well above average when compared with similar schools. Pupils' 'fact based' knowledge of science is often good, although there remain weaknesses in investigative work.

11 Standards in all other subjects are similar to those found in other schools for seven and eleven-year-olds, except in information and communications technology (ICT) and music where they are below expectations.

12 There is a relatively small number of pupils with higher achievement throughout the school but some are capable of making better progress. Their achievement is sometimes limited by a lack of different planning and specific challenge for their learning needs.

13 Pupils with special educational needs make the same steady progress as their peers. Where lessons are specifically designed to meet their need such as Year 2 and 6 literacy sessions with the special educational needs co-ordinator, pupils are acquiring essential basic skills in a structured way based on their assessed needs and making the progress to be expected. Supplementary work in literacy skills, although useful, sometimes limits progress in other areas because of withdrawal from class and does not necessarily ensure best overall progress. The work of the learning mentor is beginning to have a positive effect on enabling pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties to become more settled. This is allowing them to develop more positive attitudes to learning and hence to raising standards.

14 There has been a small improvement in the provision for pupils with English as an additional language since the previous inspection. Most pupils currently make satisfactory progress especially when receiving support.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15 Pupils enjoy coming to school and they are proud of their school's many achievements. They are friendly and welcoming children and in the main they have good attitudes to school, although their attitudes to learning can be more variable. This judgement indicates an improvement since the previous inspection. Children in the Foundation Stage settle well and enjoy coming to school. Pupils' interest in learning is satisfactory overall and is good when they find lessons stimulating or particularly relevant. In such lessons pupils are able to concentrate and work well. For example, a mathematics lesson based on the use of percentages in everyday life encouraged Year 6 pupils to work with enthusiasm. Similarly, most lessons in the reception class encourage young pupils to pay attention, listen carefully and to try hard.

16 Over this term the number of pupils speaking English as an additional language and requiring support has doubled. New pupils have been admitted every week, most of them without any English, and many of them speaking different European languages. The school has responded well by allocating specific pupils to care for and support the new arrivals socially. The excellent culture of the school has enabled pupils to settle quickly into their new environment, but appropriate support for their learning is barely adequate to cater for their needs.

17 Pupils with special educational needs are also fully integrated into the activities of the school and the school works hard to build their self-esteem and help them to develop positive attitudes to their learning. The work of the Learning Mentor is beginning to have a positive affect upon raising the self-esteem of pupils through awareness of the choices they are making and in anger management.

18 Behaviour overall is satisfactory. However, in lessons it is often good and reflects the school's success in implementing a common strategy for promoting good behaviour. In some lessons, and sometimes in one year Year 6 class, whilst the majority of pupils are attentive, a minority – mainly boys, are restless and fidgety which affects the quality of learning of other pupils. In these less successful lessons classroom management techniques are not as effective as they might be. In contrast, a Year 4 design and technology lesson which included practical work, was well structured and resulted in pupils having a high level of interest in the task and trying hard with their work. Around school and in the playground behaviour is satisfactory overall. There have been seven fixed period exclusions in the last year. The headteacher and governing body took all appropriate measures and the exclusions were imposed only as a final resort. No incidents of bullying or racist behaviour were seen in the school during the inspection week.

19 Relationships in school between teachers and pupils are good and there are many adults associated with school who provide good role models for the children. However, despite the many efforts of the school to promote respect for others, the quality of relationships between children can vary. Some older pupils, and particularly boys in Year 6, do not value the contributions of their classmates. The recent involvement in the Quaker Peace Project in Years 4 and 5 demonstrates the school's continuing intent to develop pupils' self-esteem and their awareness of the needs of others. The school works hard to foster the personal development of all its pupils. Pupils of all ages assume responsibility for various monitor duties in class, and older ones help in the dining room and around school. The various extra-curricular activities are well attended, including the opportunity for some higher attaining pupils to attend the Saturday 'school' at a nearby technology college.

20 The level of attendance at school is well below the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence, whilst still above the national average, has improved since the last inspection. However, absence at this rate remains poor and progress for some children is hampered by poor attendance. Holidays taken during term time account for a certain level of absence. Parents also remove their children from the school without proper notification and this affects absence rates. Most children arrive on time for the start of the school day although a significant minority do not.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21 The quality of teaching and learning is currently satisfactory overall, which maintains the judgement of the previous inspection. However, within this overall judgement there is a greater amount of good and less unsatisfactory teaching than seen previously. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good and sometimes very good. Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall and is often good at the end of each key stage. During the period of the inspection teaching was excellent in almost two per cent of lessons, very good in nine per cent, good in almost 38 per cent, satisfactory in 47 per cent and unsatisfactory in less than four per cent of the lessons observed.

22 Teachers' understanding of the learning needs of children in the Foundation Stage is very good. The planning of activities is extremely thorough and reflects the Early Learning Goals for children well. The teacher has high but achievable expectations of the children as seen in a counting activity where, with support, pupils count to 50 emphasising fives. Staff have developed a warm and caring environment where, for instance, in work on the letter of the day, a pupil whose name begins with 'T' wears a tiara which makes the child feel special and reinforces the knowledge of the letter well. Although the classroom is very small it is packed with interesting activities and children are immersed in words both written and spoken. This has a very positive effect upon the rate of progress made. However, the quality of pupils' learning in areas of social and physical development is restricted by the lack of a

suitable outdoor play area for the youngest pupils. This was a key issue in the previous inspection of the school and the school has been slow to address this.

23 Teachers' knowledge and understanding is satisfactory overall, with some areas of considerable strength. This is exemplified in an excellent Year 4 design and technology lesson, which clearly built on recent work in science. Here the teacher's subject specialism and obvious interest in the subject rubs off onto the pupils who are very keen to create a Christmas card that lights up and includes a switch.

24 Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the teaching of literacy and numeracy is generally good especially in Key Stage 1. Here teaching is broken down into the small steps necessary for pupils to make consistent progress. The teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing, and using numbers is mostly good, but the development of problem solving and investigational skills is not as strong. Teachers understandably have concerns about the behaviour of pupils in some lessons especially in Key Stage 2 and therefore often restrict the activities to pupils observing a task rather than carrying out their own research or planning, setting up and conducting tests themselves. This limits the development of independent learning strategies and results in some pupils being very dependent upon the teacher to tell them what to do.

25 The planning of lessons is satisfactory overall. Planning for literacy and numeracy activities clearly reflects the structure of the national strategies. However, in other subjects the planning of many lessons is the same or very similar for all pupils within the class and this sometimes restricts the progress made by higher attaining pupils. While extension activities are sometimes available for the more able pupils this is not consistent and is an area for further development. Where different activities are planned for different groups of pupils, particularly at the end of both key stages, the progress made by these pupils is good.

26 The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory overall. In some lessons, pupils at the very early stages of speaking English are expected to take part in the same activities as the rest of the class. While this is sometimes appropriate when additional support is provided, mother tongue support is limited. The support assistant with school based responsibility for this area works with clear commitment to the pupils and very diligently carries a lot of responsibility. However, there is limited teaching support and no expertise in the wide range of languages spoken by pupils as their first language. This makes it hard for some pupils newly arrived to the school to feel confident and they take some time until they have sufficient speaking skills to contribute to lessons. This is an area that the school is rightly concerned about and is an issue for further development.

27 Pupils with special educational needs are satisfactorily taught. At best, work is specifically planned to meet their needs and this results in good progress. However, not all work is sufficiently well matched to the targets on their individual education plans and they are sometimes frustrated by tasks which are too demanding. While they receive regular practice in the key skills of reading and spelling, this support is neither necessarily well timed nor strictly relevant to their class work. Support within the classroom is most suitable and enables pupils to make progress over the whole curriculum, but is very dependent on the skills of the individual teachers who plan the tasks. Support staff who work with individual pupils provide effective on-going support and are often well informed about precise needs. The work of the learning mentor, a qualified teacher, is beginning to have a positive effect on the quality of pupils' learning.

28 A particular strength in teaching throughout most of the school is the usually good management of pupils who can behave poorly when not managed effectively. Staff are very committed to their work and the pupils in their care. Most, including newly qualified teachers,

have developed warm, calm and supportive relationships with pupils. Staff usually make clear what is and is not acceptable behaviour and because pupils are generally keen to receive praise they mostly respond positively to the range of strategies and rewards employed. However, very occasionally teachers of the older pupils and some temporary staff are not always fully aware of the deteriorating behaviour and weak management affects the quality of teaching and learning which becomes unsatisfactory.

29 Teachers in reception and Key Stage 1 generally employ effective teaching methods. This includes activities for the whole class, groups and occasionally for individuals. In Key Stage 2 this is more variable. Whilst the social and educational inclusion of all pupils is something the school values highly, in practice this is not always a strong feature of lessons. While some teachers give the pupils plenty of opportunities to share their knowledge and ideas this is not universal. On too many occasions teachers only ask questions or accept answers from those that shout out or put their hands up. In many cases this is predominantly boys and girls are often passive and uninvolved. Teachers do not make enough use of directed questions to the quieter pupils to draw them into discussions and this limits the progress some pupils, including girls, those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make. There are relatively few opportunities for pupils to present reports to class, take part in drama activities or debates or in performances of dance or music.

30 The use of time and resources within lessons is sound overall. A suitable range of good quality reading materials is used well within literacy activities. However, the library in the entrance hall and the materials in the excellent 'Aztec Room' are underused. Very few activities were observed during the inspection or reflected in recent work, of the pupils making best use of the library and investigative resources available.

31 The quality and use of support staff is good and makes a positive impact upon pupils' learning. Support staff, although not generous for the number and needs of the pupils, are very effective in supporting pupils in the range of activities. This is particularly seen in Reception and Years 4 and 5 where support staff have a firm grasp of the roles they undertake and enhance the quality of teaching. These staff are involved in planning activities and are well briefed and boost both the personal and academic progress of pupils.

32 Staff give good verbal feedback to pupils. This is particularly effective in Year 6 where a senior teacher makes it very clear to pupils what they have done well and how to improve their work. This was seen to be effective in a very good mathematics lesson where feedback was given to low ability groups of pupils that enabled them to better understand the work they were doing and so improve the quality of their learning. However, in some activities in Year 3 the feedback given is not as helpful. The marking of work across the school is satisfactory, but variable. The use of homework is satisfactory overall but is something that parents who want their children to succeed feel is not well developed. The school has a suitable programme of encouraging pupils to take reading books home regularly and this is effective, for instance in Year 1. However, the giving of homework in some classes for older pupils is not systematic. Staff have tried various initiatives, but have sometimes become discouraged by the lack of support from a significant number of families.

33 The quality of learning for the majority of pupils as seen in lessons and reflected in recent samples of work is sound. A good proportion of pupils in some year groups make good progress. Children in the Foundation Stage learn well and make consistently good and sometimes very good progress, because staff provide a calm and well-organised learning environment where tasks contain a good level of challenge. Pupils in Year 2 make consistently good progress especially in English and mathematics because of the high quality of planning and good expectations of what the pupils can and will achieve. Pupils in

one Year 6 class also make good progress because of the clear understanding of exactly what the pupils need to do to improve and the good demands made of the pupils.

34 The school has introduced a very thorough, well-considered and effective programme of additional support for pupils prior to end-of-year national tests. Staff work extremely conscientiously to use the assessment information available; particularly in English and mathematics, to plan specific activities to enable pupils to make progress in areas of weakness. Pupils make good progress in learning facts such as in science, history and geography but less progress in areas of learning where they have to use this information to draw conclusions, solve problems or carry out research.

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

35 The curriculum for pupils in Reception is good, with effective and detailed planning to ensure children undertake activities towards developing all aspects of the Early Learning Goals. There is an improvement in planning for the youngest pupils since the previous inspection of the school. The school's curriculum for infant and junior pupils includes all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Overall standards of curriculum planning are satisfactory as they were in the previous inspection. Schemes of work are available to ensure the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study are included. However, in practice there is not a good balance in what is provided.

36 The school has rightly chosen to boost the development of literacy and numeracy skills and to devote a lot of its resources to promoting pupils' social skills in order to equip them for future learning and life beyond school. As a result, some subjects are allocated very little time and the vital opportunities for pupils to do practical work, to use their imagination and to be creative are limited. Moreover, because understanding often develops best from practical tasks, pupils need opportunities to apply their skills. Teachers are not including such opportunities sufficiently in their planning.

37 In focusing on literacy, numeracy and social skills, the provision for subjects such as music has not been monitored and attainment has suffered. ICT has not been used sufficiently across the curriculum and is not being used enough to enhance the learning of literacy and numeracy. Cross-curricular links, which would provide valuable opportunities for developing these skills, are not regularly planned. Thus, although most basic literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively in English and mathematics lessons, pupils do not consolidate these skills by using them for a range of different purposes on a regular basis. However, the school provides a good range of booster classes and revision programmes to enable pupils to do as well as possible in national tests.

38 Pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate provision, although the usefulness of the different arrangements varies. The decision to provide a literacy session, particularly for these pupils in Years 2 and 6, means that their needs can be dealt with in a smaller group with work at a more appropriate level. Nevertheless, the diverse needs of the Year 2 pupils means that the special educational needs co-ordinator has to work hard to meet the problems pupils encounter, because of lack of other adult support. Withdrawal in small groups or as individuals for specific practice does not make best use of the limited time available, especially as pupils are frequently removed from literacy lessons and miss important input. Some of this work could be done as homework or under the supervision of support staff. While work alongside pupils in class lessons, such as history, is the most relevant for day-to-day learning, the special educational needs co-ordinator is not sufficiently well involved in lesson planning to maximise the opportunity to assist pupils in overcoming

their difficulties. Whilst curriculum provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory overall, the amount of teaching support is limited.

39 The school is firmly committed to the social and educational inclusion of all pupils. However, although the school's policy for equal opportunities is sound, daily practice does not always ensure this is fulfilled at the present time. Boys often dominate lessons, especially in Year 6, because of their assertive behaviour, and in ICT they have been given an additional opportunity, namely to produce a music CD-Rom, not available to the girls. Pupils with special educational needs or weaker reading skills are regularly withdrawn from other lessons, not necessarily to their overall advantage.

40 Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Pupils regularly take part in 'circle time' sessions, which enhance their self-esteem and increase their understanding of their fellow pupils' points of view. Additional provision such as the Quaker Peace Project enhances this input and furthers pupils' skills. Effective mentoring sessions are provided for pupils who need more help in areas such as anger management. The school takes part in external initiatives such as the Healthy Schools project to ensure pupils receive appropriate advice about healthy living, and also involves expert workers in the field over issues such as drugs awareness and sex education.

41 There are very good opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities. After-school clubs are currently on offer, usually to older pupils, in football, netball, arts and crafts and French. There have also been valuable opportunities recently to receive training in basketball, hockey and cross-country running. Pupils can also join classes with 'The Children's University' and receive violin or brass tuition. These activities are aimed to increase the learning opportunities for pupils from deprived communities. They have opportunities to benefit from residential visits as well as frequent trips to farms, gardens, museums and places of worship to support work in the curriculum. There is a useful business link and opportunities to perform in the community. Curricular links with a local secondary school also enhance provision in science and ICT, especially for higher attainers who benefit from additional classes. Liaison with the local beacon school is providing invaluable inspiration and support for subject co-ordinators.

42 The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This indicates an overall improvement since the previous inspection. The strong ethos of the school is the focus for this development and it is transmitted through the developing relationships within the community of the school.

43 The provision for spiritual development is mostly good. The main sources of spiritual development are collective acts of worship and the teaching of religious education. Whole-school assemblies present good opportunities for pupils to praise and celebrate through music, prayer and dance in the company of teachers and parents. Teachers show sensitivity to the needs of all pupils by emphasising common themes taken from a wide range of religious traditions. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the meaning of significant stories and themes. The curriculum for religious knowledge is effective in promoting the beliefs, lifestyles and ceremonies that characterise Christianity and other faiths. Spiritual development is less common in other aspects of the curriculum. It is evident during a lesson in design and technology, however, when pupils from Year 4 are in awe at their own achievement in making the lights work on a model.

44 The provision for moral development is very good. During all lessons and at other times throughout the school day, the emphasis is placed on the encouragement of good behaviour and other positive attributes. The 'Golden Rules' that underpin this philosophy are stated in every classroom and receive a good response from pupils. These guides for living

together with mutual respect along with appropriate rules for playground behaviour are devised with sensible contributions from pupils. Reward systems are well established and managed by teachers and have a positive influence on classroom behaviour. When examples of bad behaviour or incidents of bullying do occur they are dealt with effectively by rapid intervention and appropriate sanctions, although occasionally boys are allowed to dominate lessons. The most effective influence on moral development is provided by the positive relationships between teachers, classroom assistants and pupils.

45 The provision for social development is excellent and is due to the leadership of the headteacher who has established an ethos of pride in school and community. Pupils of all abilities and from all cultural backgrounds are encouraged to work and play together in mutual support and respect. They are taught to be responsible for their own actions and to work collaboratively. New arrivals are supported and disaffected pupils gain self-esteem through sensitively designed activities provided by teachers from the Quaker Peace Project. Pupils with learning difficulties are able to discuss their problems with learning mentors and poor readers receive support from adult reading volunteers. Some older pupils attend The Children's University's activities on Saturday morning, which provide practical activities that promote confidence and a motivation to learn. High attainers have opportunities to attend master classes and to receive 'buddy' support from King Edward's School as part of their technology school status. The community links with business partner Arvin Meritor and the Allens Croft Project have provided practical help and enrichment to the life of the school through various activities. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities including a residential visit to Wales, which extend further the impressive range of opportunities for social development.

46 The provision for cultural development is good and reflects the school's commitment to equal opportunities. The arrival of refugees and asylum seekers adds to the existing cultural mix and is seen as an opportunity to increase the school's awareness of the world. A bilingual classroom assistant effectively supports new arrivals. Visits to museums, theatres and the immediate locality provide effective opportunities for cultural development. Themes in collective worship and religious education are chosen to reflect the wide range of cultures represented in the school. The display of 'postcards from heaven' in the school hall in which words from different religions are quoted is an effective reminder to the pupils that all cultures contribute to the bank of human wisdom.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47 Within a welcoming, safe and secure environment, the school provides a very good level of pastoral care and support for its pupils. The quality of care provided has improved since the previous inspection. The school has formal behaviour and anti-bullying policies, including the values embodied in the 'Golden Rules' that are on display throughout the school. Agreed rewards and sanctions are used very well. They are applied in a consistent and non-intrusive manner in the majority of classes. Pupils appreciate the rewards for appropriate behaviour and understand the consequences of poor behaviour. Regular assemblies acknowledge the good behaviour of pupils alongside examples of effort and good work. The school makes appropriate plans to ensure that the social and educational inclusion of pupils is ensured, although in practice this is sometimes affected by the poor behaviour of a small number of older boys.

48 The last inspection report called upon the school to continue to explore means of improving pupils' attendance. The school has worked hard to do so. However, attendance is still well below the national average. Teaching and office staff pay regular attention to individual pupil absence. The school also works well with the educational social worker in order to monitor, and respond to, persistent absentees. The number of very poor attendees is

reducing as a result of this careful attention. With the support of their business partners, the school has introduced new initiatives to highlight the need for good attendance within the school community. A comprehensive range of awards and certificates acknowledge good attendance on both an individual and class basis. School documents and assemblies focus on the need for regular school attendance. A lively 'Be on time' drive last year concentrated on improving punctuality. Whilst most pupils strive to meet these targets, some parents do not appreciate the impact of absence on their children's progress.

49 Teachers know their pupils very well and strive to respond to their needs. A significant strength of the school is the time and effort devoted to the personal development of its pupils. Timetabled sessions concentrate, in particular, on helping pupils to work together and to value other's contributions. The recent appointment of a Learning Mentor provides extra capacity within the school to support the particular needs of some children and this work is effective. The school is active in seeking opportunities that will offer new experiences to their pupils in order to extend their learning and to promote self-confidence. Such opportunities are many and varied including the Schools Maths Challenge, holiday play schemes, The Children's University and the business links with a local company. Pupils are assigned 'reading buddies' as a means of offering additional peer support. Recently the school has been involved in the Healthy Schools Initiative and plans to focus on five specific targets, one of which is the playground, which is a current priority for the school council.

50 The health, safety and well-being of pupils are given a very high priority by the school and its staff. A practical example was seen following a downpour at the beginning of one school day that resulted in many drenched children. They were welcomed into school, dried off and spare clothes provided where necessary. The headteacher manages child protection matters in a sensitive manner and maintains good links with the external agencies. Fire drills are practised regularly and appropriate arrangements are in place for first aid and the care of sick children. There are good levels of supervision in the playground and children of all ages share the large, flat space in a sensible way. Play equipment is available at lunchtime. The dining room is old and the facilities need considerable attention, but the efforts of all the staff involved ensure children eat in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

51 The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have improved since the previous inspection; they are good overall and well managed by the assessment co-ordinator. The consistency and use of marking, whilst variable, has improved since the time of the last inspection. In English and mathematics marking has become a useful tool for guiding pupils towards further improvement. Teachers use the marking of work, observations and discussions to judge the progress of their pupils. These informal methods are complemented in Key Stage 2 by formal tests, taken every half term in English, mathematics and science. Data is also available from attainment on entry to the school, national tests at ages seven and eleven, middle infant tests and assessment of performance in non-statutory tests in English and mathematics in Years 3, 4 and 5. However, the formal assessment of pupils' progress and attainment in other subjects of the curriculum remains largely undeveloped.

52 Assessment information is used mainly to guide planning in English and mathematics and these procedures have helped teachers to raise standards in these subjects. Analysis of the results of formal tests is used to identify areas of subject weakness. Following meetings with senior staff, the areas for focus are agreed and decisions are made about training needs. Teachers place emphasis on the focus area and pupils are tested to judge improvement. These procedures have been successful in identifying writing as the focus for last year. The school has also accurately identified applying and using mathematics, scientific enquiry and the use of mathematics in science as areas of curriculum weakness. This cycle of analysis, identification and monitoring is developing well and succeeds because

of the skills of the co-ordinator and the shared commitment of the staff. There is a need for the skills of analysis to be shared with the co-ordinators for English and mathematics and for the process to be employed across the curriculum.

53 The high proportion of pupils moving in and out of the school makes the monitoring of their academic progress very difficult. The school is aware that the mobility issue is also a reason why procedures for tracking individual pupils are essential. The process is made more difficult because of the limited availability of the computer and the lack of training with the appropriate software. Procedures are being developed for the use of assessment data combined with class observation to identify personal, group and class improvement targets. These targets are being developed in English and the process is to be extended shortly to mathematics and science. The use of assessment information is currently satisfactory.

54 Pupils are appropriately assessed to ascertain their special educational needs when they are identified as making less than expected progress and external agencies are brought in to advise and support. Individual education plans are not, however, always sufficiently precise to provide guidance on the next steps in learning, and as a result, some targets have to be broken down further so that pupils do not take a long time to achieve them. Although they are rightly based on basic skills, the methods for teaching them are not necessarily realistic because of the actual day-to-day provision organised for pupils. However, the special educational needs co-ordinator takes a personal interest in each pupil and knows them well, including their individual circumstances, hopes and attitudes.

55 A specialist teacher from the local education authority's Task Force assesses the needs of pupils speaking English as an additional language on arrival at the school. Mother-tongue speakers are available on request to interpret or translate for pupils or families who are new to this country. The specialist teacher supports specific Year 6 pupils one afternoon each week, enabling them to acquire a 'survival language' as soon as possible. She also provides materials and guidance to the part-time classroom assistant who is employed to support the other pupils individually during lessons. The classroom assistant speaks a number of Asian languages, and offers very effective support and help to pupils and their families. Her time is allocated according to a priority decided by the school. Assessments and monitoring of pupils' progress are discussed appropriately. Recording systems are being developed. However, the overall amount of support for some pupils speaking minority languages is barely adequate.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56 The replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire, attendance at the parents' meeting and discussions with parents during the inspection indicate that parents' views of the school are very positive indeed. They are particularly pleased with the leadership and management of the school. Parents and carers feel very welcomed by the school and are comfortable about raising any questions or concerns they might have. The headteacher agrees that easy access to staff is of great importance. Parents also recognise the encouragement the school and its teachers give to their children; effort, good work and helpful behaviour are all valued. At the parents' meeting many agreed that the school is playing a pivotal role in the redevelopment of the local community. However, whilst parents have more positive views of the school than at the previous inspection few choose to be actively involved in the education of their children.

57 The last inspection report required the school to continue to explore means of increasing the involvement of parents in their children's learning at home and school. The school has responded vigorously to this target both in terms of building relationships and in providing a good range of opportunities for parents and carers. The Reception class staff

establish good links with parents and carers as children enter the school. Close daily contact between school and parents at this stage helps children with their early learning. As pupils progress through the school, parents are encouraged to help with reading, spellings and tables. However, their contribution to such homework activity remains relatively low, particularly beyond the early years. Family literacy programmes and the current series of 'Inspire' workshops seek to explain and involve parents in their children's educational experiences. Consultation meetings to discuss individual pupils' progress now involve parents, teachers and children, and target-setting reviews are a significant part of these discussions. Most parents attend these review meetings, which on average have 80 per cent attendance, and this is a good sign. Home/school agreements are in place and acknowledged by parents and carers.

58 Regular newsletters giving details of school events are sent to parents. School documents in general are well written and informative. They also contain useful explanations of school and educational matters, offering parents the opportunity to appreciate the background to school priorities. Parents are welcomed into the body of the school where excellent displays celebrate the success of the school and its community. The annual written reports on the progress of pupils meet statutory requirements. However, many of the teacher comments are brief, of a descriptive nature and do not provide a clear picture of progress nor identify many targets for future improvement. Advance information about topic work and the curriculum in general is not usually circulated. Some parents express an interest in knowing more about such matters.

59 The school encourages parents to help in the life of the school and a small number do so, particularly in the classes for younger pupils. Those adults who help with reading in school are carefully trained, either by teachers in school or by the city scheme 'Reading Volunteers'. Parents also help with the organisation of the Christmas activities in school and accompany classes on visits and swimming lessons. A group of parents has been involved in brightening up the exterior of the school by painting railings and playground planters.

60 The parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in their children's individual education plans and reviews, and home visits are undertaken if necessary. Pupils are also involved in the reviews so that everyone knows what is expected. The special educational needs co-ordinator takes part in parents' evenings with the class teacher, so that progress in all pupils' work is accurately reported.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61 The quality of leadership and management is good overall with some particularly important strengths. The personal leadership and management of the headteacher is excellent. This has been a pivotal factor in helping the school progress through times of very low attainment and considerable social change and uncertainty. Parents are virtually unanimous in their praise for the headteacher who is seen as central to helping the school to move forward. The inspection team shares the approval of staff, parents, governors, the local community and representatives of a wide range of organisations in noting the considerable dedication and commitment to the school and community provided by the headteacher. This was an area of strength noted in the previous inspection of the school, when the headteacher was newly appointed, and the quality of leadership has improved even further since then. The school effectively fulfils its aims and enhances pupils' self-esteem and personal development well.

62 The headteacher with the very able support of the new senior management team has ensured that the school has developed an excellent understanding of the educational direction required. School priorities are widely discussed and thoroughly considered. All

possible options are examined when planning changes to bring about improvement. Staff, and particularly senior staff, welcome initiatives and projects that enable the school to bring about improvements in funding and provision and that will raise pupils' self-esteem and standards of attainment. All senior staff are particularly conscientious, committed to the school and very hard working, clearly leading others by example.

63 The work of the governing body is good overall and there are several areas of strength. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They are well led by a chair and vice chair who are well informed about the work of the school and the difficulties in, and priorities of, the local community. Experienced governors have a clear understanding of their roles and of how they can help shape the direction of the school. Most have a clear awareness that whilst major improvements have been made recently more remains to be done. These experienced governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are helping those who are more recently elected have a clearer grasp of the continuing focus upon raising standards and are aware that they need to counter-balance any parental feeling of complacency that nothing more needs to be done.

64 Governors' committees meet appropriately and the finance committee is growing in the awareness of its responsibilities. It is becoming an effective group, which provides much needed support when deciding between competing priorities, and when making difficult decisions. The work of the curriculum committee is not yet as effective as other areas and is at an early stage of development. The school is keen to develop governors' awareness of how the curriculum is delivered by encouraging focused visits to the classroom by governors. Whilst governors feel comfortable discussing plans with staff there is not an extensive programme for discussing curriculum initiatives in depth. However, there are plans to further involve newly elected governors in additional training to help develop their awareness of such matters.

65 The monitoring and evaluation of planning, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. All staff, including those newly appointed to the school, have been observed teaching English and mathematics by senior members of staff or external consultants. The subject co-ordinator in English has a good grasp of her monitoring role, but in some other subjects there is room for the further development. As yet there have been only limited opportunities to monitor and evaluate the quality of planning, teaching and learning in other subjects. The monitoring of such issues as educational inclusion and equality of opportunity are largely informal and has led to boys dominating some lessons. This is partly because of recent staff changes and temporary staffing arrangements. However, this was an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Because assessment in non-core subjects is relatively informal and monitoring only limited, this has allowed some areas of weakness, such as in ICT and music, to develop. There is room for further improvement in monitoring and this remains a key issue for development in order to raise standards further.

66 The appropriateness of the school's priorities for development is generally good. School development planning is well considered and thorough. The school has understandably focused upon the development of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. However, to some extent this has been slightly to the detriment of other subjects and the development of cross-curricular skills such as writing in history or religious education and mathematics in science and geography. Similarly, the development of ICT has not advanced as far as the school would have wished and music has been under-developed because subject leadership and monitoring have been weak. However, the action taken to meet the school's targets, particularly in raising standards in the core subjects, has been very good.

67 The staff and governors share a commitment to further improvement, with senior staff and experienced governors being aware of the many areas of work requiring continued

development. The capacity to succeed is good. However, with half the teaching staff being newly qualified or at an early stage of their career, and some staff on temporary contracts, and imminent changes in other staffing areas, a heavy burden of responsibility to continue to drive the school forward is placed on the senior management team.

68 Financial planning in the school is currently very efficient. A newly elected governor with suitable experience has already become an asset to financial planning. The school makes good use of the local education authority's finance officer who works in school on a weekly basis. This helps to ensure that day-to-day financial management is effective. The school secretary is quietly efficient and supports the administrative arrangements of the school well. The school applies the principles of best value to purchases.

69 The school makes excellent use of specific grants for their designated purpose. Funding such as that used to create the excellent resource of the 'Aztec Room' is also used extremely effectively. There are very effective links with a local business and other schools. Such projects are eminently valuable in saying to all those visiting the school in whatever capacity that this school and these children are important. These projects have helped to raise the self-esteem of pupils, staff and the local community and had a positive impact upon raising standards in all areas.

70 The school has a satisfactory match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum. The quality of staff training has had a positive impact on subjects identified in need of improvement in the previous inspection. There is a satisfactory number of support staff but when compared to similar schools the number of such staff is not generous. Because of this, some staff such as the support assistant with responsibility for English as an additional language, carry a lot of responsibility. The school is wisely seeking all possible means to extend the teaching support for such pupils and the amount of mother tongue support available especially for pupils newly arrived to this country.

71 The special educational needs co-ordinator carries out the administration of record keeping and paperwork conscientiously. But, there is no overview to ensure that the best use is made of her expertise by involving her in class planning or influencing timetabling for the benefit of special educational needs pupils. Moreover, she is not always informed of classroom practice and was surprised, for instance, when a junior pupil stated that she was not allowed to join her handwriting even though the co-ordinator expected the pupil to be doing so in her year group.

72 The quality of the accommodation is satisfactory overall with some real areas of strength. The school is very attractively decorated internally. Staff see the expansive display of pupils' work and photographic evidence of projects such as the residential visits made by older pupils as a very important statement to the school community. There are extensive displays congratulating the pupils and thanking the very many organisations and individuals who help the school in a myriad of ways. The Aztec Room is a particularly impressive multi-purpose area, although is not used much as a library.

73 The major area of weakness in the accommodation is the state of the school canteen. This is poor and makes a very negative statement to the community about the importance of these pupils and their diet. When pupils follow a healthy eating project and then eat in such poor surroundings this must send very mixed and confusing messages to the pupils and their parents. The previous inspection of the school identified that there were insufficient play facilities for the children under five. The school has been slow to act upon this issue and this remains an area for development.

74 Learning resources are generally satisfactory. Until very recently the budget for the range of materials has been very tight and some subject areas including ICT, design and technology and music have some shortfalls. The quality of books in the school libraries is generally good, although there are not as many books for the number of pupils as might be expected. There is a lack of resources for music and this hinders the progress that pupils make in this subject. Similarly, the problems associated with the school computer system have affected the necessary improvements in the subject and limited the progress pupils make. This is an area for further development.

75 The expenditure per pupil is extremely high in comparison to national averages, but this has not been the case until the last two years. With the agreement of the local education authority the school has had contingency arrangements for school budgeting. However, taking all factors into account whilst standards are still below national averages, they are improving and the school generally provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

76 The governors, headteacher and staff should:

(1) Continue to raise standards of attainment in English, mathematics, science, ICT and music by:

- extending the planning of activities to develop pupils' initiative and confidence through opportunities to use and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding (paragraphs 24, 30, 105, 119, 146);
- extending the use of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology skills across the curriculum (paragraphs 37, 66, 102, 112, 123, 140, 154, 161);
- extending the opportunities for co-ordinators to monitor the quality of planning, teaching and learning in areas for which they hold responsibility (paragraphs 65, 116, 123, 128, 147);
- improving the general range of resources and especially in information and communications technology and music (paragraphs 74, 154, 160);
- improving the attendance and punctuality of pupils throughout the school (paragraphs 20, 48).

(2) Improve the overall quality of teaching in the school by:

- ensuring a suitable number of hours is allocated to the teaching of skills in each subject (paragraphs 36, 125, 133, 135);
- sharing best practice (paragraphs 22-24, 65, 98);
- extending the quality of planning for pupils with higher attainment and those with special educational needs to provide sufficient and appropriate challenge (paragraphs 25, 27, 38, 54, 108, 111);
- monitoring the organisation and planning of activities to ensure that girls are provided with as many opportunities to contribute to activities as boys are (paragraphs 8, 29, 39, 101, 154);
- improving the range of outdoor play activities for children in the Foundation Stage (paragraphs 22, 73, 82).

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

- increasing the amount of teaching support for pupils with English as an additional language (paragraphs 26, 55, 70, 109).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	39

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	5	20	25	2	0	0
Percentage	1.8	9.4	37.7	47.1	3.7	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

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)	190
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	125

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
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	38

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	48
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	91.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6

National comparative data	93.9
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	11	7	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	7	9
	Girls	4	7	7
	Total	8	14	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	44 (35)	78 (35)	89 (71)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	8	8
	Girls	5	6	7
	Total	12	14	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67 (29)	78 (82)	83 (76)
	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	11	15	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	5	11
	Girls	10	11	15
	Total	14	16	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	54 (37)	62 (53)	100 (84)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	5	9
	Girls	10	11	15
	Total	15	16	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (21)	62 (32)	92 (63)
	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	9
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	10
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	145
Any other minority ethnic group	22

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	126

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	3	1
Other minority ethnic groups	4	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	596,765
Total expenditure	576,807
Expenditure per pupil	3,923
Balance brought forward from previous year	11,839
Balance carried forward to next year	31,797

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	187
Number of questionnaires returned	46

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	26	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	37	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	48	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	46	15	2	0
The teaching is good.	76	24	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	70	28	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	22	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	26	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	63	37	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	33	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	35	7	2	2

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents are generally very supportive of the school and think the school is well led and managed. Several parents would like to see homework set on a more regular basis.

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

77 The standard of provision for children in the Foundation Stage has improved considerably since the last inspection. This has been achieved by a marked improvement in the quality of teaching. No lessons observed during the inspection were less than good, and several were very good. Because of the teachers' very good planning, and the often excellent support of the nursery nurse, children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are enabled to make similar progress to their classmates. Their needs are quickly identified, and appropriate provision is made, using external agency support and advice where desirable.

78 Children enter the school with widely varying early experiences, most of them with very poorly developed skills in the vital areas of language and mathematical development. This is confirmed by early assessments carried out during the first few weeks of term. In spite of the good teaching in the class, only the highest achieving children are likely to attain the Early Learning Goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, and knowledge and understanding of the world by the time they move to Year 1. In the areas of personal and social and physical development, most children's attainment on admission to school is similar to that expected of a four-year-old child. The majority of children are likely to attain the Early Learning Goals in these areas by the end of their reception year, as they are in creative development, where some rich experiences contribute significantly. Most children make good progress through the year, although progress in some aspects of physical development is barely adequate because of the paucity of provision for outdoor play. There is no improvement in that area since the last inspection.

Personal and social development

79 There is a good induction process for new reception children, most of who attend full-time at the nursery class next to the school. They enter school with a positive and confident attitude, able to take full advantage of the caring and secure environment created by the staff. By the time they leave the reception class, most are achieving the Early Learning Goals in this area.

80 Most children separate easily from their parents and carers, and follow the routines and organisation of the classroom with apparent delight. The staff ensure that children know what is expected of them at every point of the day, and manage any deviation from that with very appropriate methods. They are expected to respond at once to organisational devices such as the shaking of a tambourine, when full co-operation from all earns them a class 'tick' towards a treat. There is an appropriate emphasis on independence, but the children know that their actions have an impact on others if they allow their own wishes to interfere with the class reward. The good humour and encouragement of the staff enable children to comply happily with the rules and organisation of their day. Children observed at the water tray shared equipment well, even collecting spare funnels for each other during their 'experiment'. The class follows the teacher into the playground in a silent line, full of eager anticipation for the next activity in their fun-packed day, and all children follow instructions as they join in ring games. Behaviour in class and round the school is generally very good. Relationships are very positive, children feel valued and are eager to please their teachers.

81 Children mostly demonstrate good concentration when playing with chosen activities such as glove puppets or building equipment, and when completing more formal tasks such as writing their names or recognising familiar words. The provision includes many well

chosen and appropriate tasks, but where activities are unstructured, for example the sand tray, a few children spend too much time flitting from one activity to another when staff are engaged in teaching.

82 Children join the rest of the school for lunch and break times with confidence, but there are no structured opportunities for children to learn how to overcome an appropriate element of risk in their play. They have little opportunity to face appropriate challenge. Opportunities to explore outside the classroom are very restricted because of the lack of suitable equipment and play areas. The teacher has a thorough knowledge of the developmental needs of her class, keeping careful daily notes of each child's progress and using that information in her planning for future lessons. This contributes effectively to children's learning.

Communication, language and literacy

83 Most children make good progress in this area of learning during their reception year. Because many are admitted with very poorly developed language and communication skills and find it difficult to retain learning once the focus has shifted, only the highest attaining children are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the end of the reception year.

84 All children listen attentively to their teachers. They enjoy answering in the lively news sharing or story-recall sessions on the carpet, and respond willingly to adults during individual or group activities. Many children answer with single words or phrases, and several have immature and unclear speech. None use complex sentences, although a few can relate a sequence of events such as how to organise their art activity "I had to mix two colours and I had to rub my hands together and I did a handprint." All children join in with chanting the days of the week and attempt nursery rhymes with relish. Many, however, play alongside each other with little direct conversation, rarely questioning or sharing experiences with their peers. Teachers encourage extension of children's games with timely enquiries about, for example, the whereabouts of Rabbit. This stimulates play appropriately, and extends learning well, but teachers' roles are generally supervisory over play routines as they concentrate on the focused activities such as literacy or numeracy tasks. The lack of more structured adult intervention and the limited resources for the development of role-play sessions are restricting children's opportunities to benefit from the good role models provided by their teachers. It also limits opportunities for teachers to monitor children's learning in these areas of play.

85 Strategies for encouraging reading are very well implemented. Pupils' attention is captured by such devices as announcing that Rabbit had been 'Rabbitnapped' and a note had been left in the Big Book, leading into a useful exercise in sequencing events based on a treasure hunt. Throughout all whole-class activities, there is constant reference to and reminder of previous learning, so that many pupils are able to demonstrate that they recognise several letter sounds in their name, read their name and some words, and apply limited knowledge of punctuation. Higher achieving pupils read sentences independently and recall the main events of a story in correct order.

86 All children enjoy listening to stories and the many opportunities they have to share books with adults. They are all making good progress in developing the early skills of reading, helped by the supportive and effective system of home reading. Staff send home reading diaries with children every night, writing comments about reading but also striking up a conversation with families about matters of mutual interest. This non-threatening approach is having a positive impact on carers' attitudes to home reading, and offering significant support to many children's progress. Elements of the national literacy framework are used

increasingly as the reception year continues, incorporating assessment requirements into appropriate sessions within a structure of child or adult-led activities. Children are clear about the expectations of work they do with their teachers, and are aware of aids such as alphabet posters, and familiar word banks as they tackle independent tasks.

87 Only a few children are unable to write their own names on their work without help, and many form their letters correctly. Workbooks indicate that many pupils were admitted with poor pencil control, but have made good progress over the term, learning to copy or independently write sentences. There are many appropriate activities provided for children to practise their writing skills, with different resources such as chalk, pencils, crayons and paints. Staff work alongside children as they 'plan' their monster books, asking probing questions that make pupils think about the content of their contributions, before scribing the words that children dictate. This is having a beneficial effect on pupils' understanding of words, moving learning on as they widen children's vocabulary.

Mathematical development

88 On admission to school, most children have very poor mathematical learning. Very few children, for example, are secure in counting beyond ten correctly. The curriculum and daily routine is well planned to develop key mathematical skills, and children make good progress. However, most do not achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. Children with special educational needs and those who speak a language other than English have specific daily activities provided for them, but are taught alongside other children. These tasks are well matched to their learning levels, and they make good progress.

89 Very good teaching strategies enable children to count confidently together, emphasising number patterns in multiples of five as they do, and to identify missing numbers to ten on a blank number line. In a whole-class session, several higher achieving children are able to explain how they worked out one less than three, and have a clear idea of numbers before and after nine without any visual clues. This is good progress since admission. However, few children are yet able to recognise numerals independently, and many have difficulty in writing them. They are becoming familiar with mathematical language such as 'fewer', 'how many left', 'count back', 'take away', and complete activities to reinforce this learning practically. There is appropriate use of the national numeracy framework to move children's experiences on, although for some lower ability children the pace is currently too fast. The teacher keeps very good records of children's progress in focused activity groups, where tasks are planned appropriately to suit ability levels. She uses that information to plan reinforcement or developmental work for each child. Other activities are free choice during mathematical sessions, without direct adult intervention. Many children are not yet confident in their free choice activities.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

90 Children are admitted to the reception class with a wide variety of learning, but many lack the language skills and experience to build effectively on that knowledge. Some find it difficult to retain key learning once an activity has ceased, or once outside the security of the classroom. Most are unlikely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the end of the reception year in spite of good teaching.

91 All demonstrate a curiosity about their world, finding for example, that torchlight looks different when shone through a prism. There is an air of excitement around the table of activities to investigate colour and light, as children explore the changes made when different acetates are placed over objects. They learn to predict what will happen when mixing

colours, and record the outcomes in appropriately simple ways. But many can say little about what they are doing, preferring to talk about events earlier in the day rather than about the exciting effects they are experiencing. They enjoy building with construction toys and learning different ways of shaping, sticking and joining materials. But conversation about these activities is limited unless there is an adult present to move learning on.

92 Most children use the computer with confidence, following a simple matching game, but several still click the mouse randomly. Many use the listening centre independently. Earlier this term all the children were involved in making porridge like Daddy Bear, mixing and stirring the ingredients and then watching as it cooked in the microwave. This appropriately encourages pupils to think about how things work. When the local fire brigade came to see the class's homemade fire engine, they heard one child declare that the wheels could not be glued on, or 'they won't go round'. There is little opportunity to explore the outdoor area without adult supervision, but autumn and spring walks around the school grounds enable children to consider the changes in season, and this is reinforced appropriately each morning when the weather and date are recorded. Children are introduced to different cultures through the celebration of festivals such as Diwali, with appropriate music and displays. This was linked effectively with the 'colour and light' topic.

Physical development

93 The good opportunities provided for children to develop independence and self control have a positive impact on their physical development, enabling most children to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the time they move to Year 1. However, children are prevented from developing their full potential in some aspects, such as pedalling, balancing, climbing steps and negotiating space, because of the lack of wheeled toys, prams and outdoor play equipment. In lessons in the hall, they move rhythmically and expressively, and change speed and direction well. Many jump, hop and try to skip as most four-year-old children can do. There is still some confusion over the difference between running and jogging, but in all activities, children show a well-developed understanding of personal space. They are beginning to become aware of the effects of exercise on their bodies, although currently they are more interested in how it makes them feel. Good teaching since admission enables children to cut out well with scissors, many have an appropriate pencil grip, and most are able to make deliberate marks on paper to represent their intentions. Colour wash pictures show great care and control with paintbrushes. Children show an understanding of shape and space as they tidy away.

Creative development

94 Children make good progress in this area of learning, experiencing many stimulating activities. They enter school with low levels of attainment and with language skills that limit rapid development of their imaginations. But very good teaching strategies have already enabled children to begin to interpret words and music effectively and to develop the earliest strand of critical evaluation. Most are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in creative development by the end of the reception year.

95 Children blend and mix colours, and learn that too much paint on a brush will cause the picture to drip and spoil when hung up to dry. They use chalkboards to explore the effects and textures on different types of paper, and make models from clay, which they roll and mould. These activities are appropriately led by adults, who build children's vocabulary by asking questions about the appearance and feel of the models, and how they might improve some aspects. There is joy in the lively singing sessions in the classroom, and children learn to try different sounds and movements to go with the rhymes they know. In the hall, dance sessions develop this effectively. Children listen to a snowflake poem, interpreting the images

created by such words as 'swirling', 'twirling', and 'drifting', after demonstrations by their teachers. They listen to appropriate music, and then perform a brief routine as adults recite the words of the poem again. Half the class watch, and are asked to suggest other ways to interpret the words. Some children show they understand at once, by standing up and moving appropriately. But all are able to follow the routine, listening and watching well. This is good provision.

96 There are many opportunities for children to experience role-play activities, through interpreting stories and dressing up in a corner of the classroom. However, there is very little room for effective provision. The staff work hard to compensate for the limited accommodation by reducing the number of tables, for example, and creating space around other activities. But children dress up from a rack of clothes, and then play their games around worktables, which distracts the group working and limits creative development. There is no safe area outside where children can build up sequences of role-play using, for example, the fire engine they made from a large cardboard box. This limits the benefits of the good stimulation provided in many of the activities.

ENGLISH

97 There has been a considerable improvement in standards of attainment overall since the last inspection report. The percentage of pupils in the school achieving the expected levels in national tests for all aspects of English has risen steadily over recent years in both key stages, and the overall trend is better than the national improvement for that period. This year the school made marked progress, just exceeding its Key Stage 2 target of 40-50 per cent at Level 4 or above by four per cent. However, test results for 2001 show that attainment is still well below national averages at the ages of seven and eleven. Inspection findings are that current standards are below average at the end of both key stages and differ from national test results because of the natural abilities of the different groups of pupils.

98 Much of the improvement has been achieved by effective and consistent implementation of the national strategy for teaching literacy across the school. At the time of the last inspection, this procedure was new to the school, but was already beginning to make an impact. The system is now firmly embedded in the daily routine, so that all teachers plan coherent and focused sessions each day which are enabling pupils to learn appropriately in all classes. Teaching in Years 2 and 6 is often particularly good as is the leadership of the subject. Teaching, and the quality of pupils learning, in other years is satisfactory.

99 There are still several areas that require a sharper focus across the school in order to extend pupils' learning further, for example, the teaching of spelling and pupils' comprehension of their reading materials. The school is aware of most of these and has already begun to address some of them, notably improving the teaching of writing, where the effectiveness of the changes is evident in enhanced performance both in national tests and in work seen during this inspection. Pupils now generally make satisfactory progress overall in English in both key stages, after a good start in the reception class, but in general there is too little challenge for the most able as pupils move through the school. The use of ICT to support and develop learning is in its infancy, but is already inspiring some pupils.

100 Pupils enter the school with poorly developed speaking and listening skills, many with an impoverished vocabulary. Through good teaching in Key Stage 1, pupils are encouraged to contribute to discussions and to listen carefully to the good role models provided by their teachers. The recent implementation of such devices as 'literacy buddies' is giving pupils the opportunity to describe their learning and thinking to others, ensuring that both the language and the concept are reinforced. By the age of seven, many pupils have made good progress,

but their skills remain below expectations. They share interesting items of news enthusiastically or answer questions about stories or events, but many pupils continue to respond with single words or incomplete sentences. All but the higher achieving pupils are unable to select the most important points to convey when sharing their news, or to talk about more than the characters from a book they like reading. Their vocabulary remains limited and repetitive.

101 By Year 6, many pupils still respond to questions about preference in reading tastes by telling the full story from a book they have just read. Higher achievers are more discriminating, explaining why they like Harry Potter books – for example, suggesting that they had changed people’s thinking about witches and wizards, ‘breaking the stereotype’. Few pupils have extended their vocabulary in this way, and therefore find it difficult to use speech to explore their thoughts and reason through problems. Tasks set in literacy hours do not always contain enough scope to extend the learning of the more able pupils. Although many of the boys are able to speak confidently and at length, the content of their contributions remains limited. Girls rarely speak in class, particularly in Years 5 and 6, while boys shout out answers or comments, often aggressively. Girls are among the higher achievers in the class, but their passive responses in lessons limits opportunity for their peers to benefit from them as role models in speaking. Overall speaking and listening skills at the end of Key Stage 2 are well below average.

102 As at the time of the last inspection, pupils listen well to their teachers, and repeat appropriately much of the technical language they are acquiring such as ‘paragraph’, ‘simile’ and ‘ellipse’ when completing tasks. But they find it difficult to think of new and interesting words for themselves to use in conversation or in written tasks. Progress in speaking and listening is variable and occasionally unsatisfactory, particularly for older pupils. The school has made little progress in providing opportunities for drama, apart from occasional sessions where pupils act out fragments of scenes such as the three witches in *Macbeth*. Some teachers have begun to use opportunities in other subjects, for example design and technology, to enable pupils to explain a process they have followed, and this is encouraging pupils to understand the wider value of the spoken word.

103 Teachers satisfactorily promote the key skills of reading throughout the school. Overall, pupils throughout the school make sound progress in developing the mechanics of following print, and are beginning to gain an understanding of the meaning it carries. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Higher and middle achievers read with confidence and expression by the age of seven, using clues from the text to identify unknown words, or occasionally breaking words into syllables.

104 Through highly structured group reading sessions which are now held at times other than the hour set aside for literacy, teachers are able to give specific and focused help which is developing pupils’ skills, and enabling them to gain an understanding of the text they are reading. There is still some way to go in this area if pupils are to build and retain their understanding of the text more thoroughly. Parents and volunteers are more involved with reading activities now, particularly for the younger pupils. Reading diaries go home each night, with some encouraging and apt entries by the school. Where parents add comments and record their children’s progress at home, there is a significant impact on learning. Volunteers come into school weekly to share books and learning with individuals and groups. This generates an inspiring enthusiasm for reading. However, despite these efforts standards in reading are below average in both key stages, although almost half the pupils in Year 2 are making good progress, and are likely to achieve the expected level of attainment.

105 Progress in reading in Key Stage 2 remains unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Reading is not a pleasure for most pupils, although they enjoy the shared

reading they do with their teachers. Although teachers continue to follow the national strategy for literacy effectively, pupils' understanding of the text is hampered by their poor vocabulary and lack of opportunities to organise their thinking coherently at times other than the literacy hour. Many read mechanically and without confidence, or do not realise that the information to answer questions is contained in the text in front of them. They are taught about the use of instructions, but are unused to practical application of this, so do not readily go to the written word to steer their way when completing set tasks. Few pupils are able to research information from reference books. There is a good, newly refurbished library in the school, but pupils have insufficient access to it. Most do not use a library at home.

106 The improvement of pupils' writing skills has been the school's principal target over the past year. Writing is specifically supported during a section of each literacy hour in all classes up to Year 4, and is taught in a separate lesson for Years 5 and 6. For all pupils, structure and vocabulary are appropriately emphasised. This enables half the pupils in Year 2 to write in sentences with appropriate use of punctuation, conveying clear meaning in their work. It provides stimulating opportunities, for instance, for Year 6 to write to an 'agony aunt' about Macbeth's problems. Handwriting is taught separately, and there is good emphasis on presentation in all literacy books. Many older pupils are unable to join their letters, but writing is generally legible. However, despite the many improvements standards in writing in both key stages are below average.

107 Spellings are now taught through a commercial phonics scheme which is beginning to have an impact on learning for younger pupils, but most pupils in Key Stage 2 have few strategies for tackling new words. They have regular spelling lists to learn, which are tested and recorded, and this is beginning to improve pupils' understanding of the importance of correct spelling. They know that dictionaries will help them, but seldom think to use them. Phonic knowledge is not well developed for many older pupils who find it difficult to follow the required procedure. Writing assessments are regularly and thoroughly carried out, providing targets for improvement for individual pupils. These are glued into literacy books for reference, but use of them by pupils and teachers is inconsistent to move learning forward. Some of the guidance on spelling is unspecific and pupils gain little from it.

108 Specific provision is made for the significant number of pupils with special educational needs, which enables them to make steady progress. Pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn from their classroom for each literacy hour. A specialist teacher teaches them in a separate room. Their needs are very varied, but they all follow the same programme. They are making satisfactory progress in developing some of the key skills for early reading and writing. However, as individual needs are not always clearly identified, some of the tasks they are set, such as colouring sheets or writing out sentences, are not appropriate and the school is wisely considering the need to carefully monitor such withdrawal activities.

109 Pupils for who English is an additional language currently make satisfactory progress too, but a recent influx has considerably strained the school's limited resources. These pupils are given good individual support by a classroom assistant, who uses materials and strategies provided by the local authority, and pupils make steady progress. However, the time available for support is very limited, particularly now that the numbers of pupils from other countries has increased dramatically. Class teachers allocate specific pupils to work alongside newly arrived pupils, which is effective in supporting pupils socially, enabling them to become involved in learning as quickly as possible. Such provision is barely adequate.

MATHEMATICS

110 The most recent national tests show that standards at Key Stage 2 are well below average while the pupils at Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with the national average. These standards were achieved after four years of steady improvement at both key stages since the time of the last inspection. When compared with similar schools, the same test results show that performance in mathematics of pupils at Key Stage 2 is about average, but well above average for pupils at Key Stage 1. These levels of improvement are considerable when seen in the context of the very poor levels of attainment by pupils on entry to the school.

111 Current standards are below the national average at both key stages. These judgements largely reflect the results at Key Stage 2 but indicate a slowing down in the rate of improvement at Key Stage 1. This is because judgements based on the observation of lessons and scrutiny of work show the present cohort in Year 2 to be less capable in mathematics than the one that took the tests last year. Most pupils make good progress including those with special educational needs because they are well supported within lessons. Pupils for who English is an additional language are not so disadvantaged in mathematics as in English and most make good progress. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and do not make the same level of progress.

112 Pupils make good progress in number work and also in shape, space and measure. As pupils move through the school they become proficient in using higher numbers in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division with increasing confidence and understanding. Most pupils are able to calculate their answers to a reasonable range of mental calculations relevant to their age. Their experience of data handling is limited however and does not extend to the many different ways of showing data. The ability of pupils to apply their mathematical understanding is also weak although some teachers are providing better opportunities for problem solving. Both of these weaknesses could be corrected through the focused support of ICT though this remains largely undeveloped as a motivating tool to enhance the mathematics curriculum. There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to consolidate their understanding within other subjects of the curriculum.

113 Since the last inspection teaching staff have improved their skills through training in the National Numeracy Strategy and co-ordinators have observed exemplary teachers in other schools. The gradual improvement in mental agility can be directly related to the improvement in teaching skills and the consistent use of a mental activity within lessons in numeracy. The headteacher has observed lessons and the last co-ordinator began to obtain a better overview of the subject through the scrutiny of teachers' planning. In 1998 a marking policy was produced and this has been useful in giving pupils a clearer idea of how they can improve their work. Data from tests is now analysed and this information is now enabling the effective targeting of individuals and groups. Targets set for the percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 or above in the last two years have been reached and passed. Advisors from the local education authority have monitored the improvements in the curriculum delivery and assessment on three occasions. The reports that followed these monitoring sessions have pointed the way for the school to make further improvements.

114 Teaching in lessons is good overall and sometimes very good in Years 4 and 6. The quality of learning is at least satisfactory, often good and reflects the quality of teaching. In Year 2 the teaching is good because the quality of class management allows every pupil to participate in the lesson. The teacher is sensitive to the needs of lower attaining pupils, giving them time to explain their mental strategies in using the 10 times table.

115 The teaching is judged to be very good in Year 4 because activities are planned that meet the needs of all pupils and classroom assistants are deployed through all the phases of the lesson. All ability groups sustain their concentration allowing the teacher to support individuals and to move them on in their understanding of multiples and partitioning. In Year 6

the lower attaining set of pupils are learning how to use simple percentages. The teaching is very good as the lesson is essentially practical and involves the pricing of familiar items such as books and CDs. The pupils are well motivated because the mathematical learning is embedded in a 'real life' problem solving exercise. The attitude of pupils towards mathematics is never less than satisfactory and good when lessons move swiftly and when tasks are well matched to ability.

116 The subject is soundly managed and the new co-ordinator for mathematics is beginning to develop her monitoring role in order to obtain a better overview of the curriculum in terms of planning and delivery. Assessment data is now more refined and proving useful in identifying areas of subject weakness in mathematics. The co-ordinator has not yet had the opportunity to study this analysis and needs to work closely with the assessment co-ordinator who has this information.

SCIENCE

117 Attainment in science is currently below average for pupils in Year 2. Inspection findings are below those reflected in the most recent national tests because of a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs within the current groups of pupils. The number of pupils achieving Level 2 or above in Key Stage 1 teacher assessment was well below average in 2001 although results had improved on 2000. The number of pupils gaining the higher Level 3 was above the national average in 2001. Although all the pupils in Year 6 in 2001 national tests achieved the expected level 4, attainment is below the expected level at present. However, the school has an effective programme to revise and revisit factual knowledge, which enables all pupils to make rapid progress in Year 6. But, pupils' skills in using their knowledge of investigating and experimental science are less well developed and are not always at the expected level. The good results in tests are a significant improvement since the last inspection and the trend is above the national one. However, the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 is below average and the shortcomings in investigational skills have not been fully addressed.

118 Throughout the school the quality of pupils' learning is at least satisfactory and the majority make sound progress. In lessons pupils sometimes make good progress but weak reading and writing skills and limited knowledge and understanding of the world around them hinders the overall quality of learning. In Year 2, pupils explore changes of state by observing what happens to ice-pops when held in the hand. They are aware that ice turns to water and vice versa. Most struggle to understand the reverse situation that the place where the ice-pop thaws most quickly is likely to be the most suitable for keeping a drink hot. Year 1 pupils explore which materials are suitable for particular functions around the house.

119 Year 5 pupils learn the facts about the workings of the heart and record their knowledge but limited literacy skills and lack of practical tasks restricts understanding of why this is a vital organ for the body. Pupils in Year 6 are able to conduct a suitable test to ascertain which rocks in a sample are permeable, and to predict which materials are likely to be the best insulators. Within a practical situation, such as considering drinks cans, they know that metal is a good conductor of heat. While all are aware of the materials that are attracted to magnets, some pupils are still at the stage where they want to try all of these materials and do not discriminate while testing or generalise their thoughts. They record their results in simple tables and higher attainers are able to suggest some reasons why an unusual result has occurred in the insulation investigation. However, few are able to investigate independently, use their own methods for recording results or raise their own questions about phenomena.

120 Overall the teaching of science is satisfactory, and better at the ends of both key stages. All teachers are efficient at organising their lessons, with effective introductions and appropriate activities which interest pupils. Questioning is pertinent to focus pupils' attention on the facts, and in the better lessons this provides opportunities for pupils to generalise and reason using the appropriate scientific vocabulary. As a result, pupils acquire the facts and are interested in the science. Their interest is further raised in the better lessons by seeing the relevance of science to daily life. In Year 2, for instance, the teacher talks about keeping drinks warm and all the class are keen to find the best place to leave a cup of tea so that it does not go cold. Homework tasks are often valuable for the same reason. Pupils in Year 6, for example, are asked to seek examples of insulation around their own homes in preparation for the lesson and to begin to understand how this affects hot water systems.

121 Teachers effectively demonstrate scientific investigations so that pupils can observe phenomena, but this limits the 'hands-on' experience which pupils need in order to develop their understanding. Moreover, the tight control of activities means that higher attainers are not often challenged in lessons, even if they offer suggestions or show more advanced understanding during discussions at the end of lessons. While practical work is essential to aid pupils' understanding, they are often unable to obtain the maximum benefit from it because they are easily excited and fail to listen to instructions. Because of their limited literacy skills and an unwillingness to use written instructions, lower attaining pupils are then unable to carry out the work without additional support from the adults.

122 While work is usually marked conscientiously, comments seldom focus on pupils' scientific learning. They are usually about literacy skills and so are not useful in helping pupils to know how to improve their science. The school inadvertently provides fewer chances for girls to take an active role in learning than their male peers. Boys commonly dominate discussion, especially in Year 6, and their assertiveness in activities means that they also take over the equipment leaving the girls little with which to carry out the practical tasks. There are good links with a local technology college where pupils with higher attainment are encouraged to attend Saturday schools.

123 Assessment procedures in science provide appropriate records of pupils' progress, but they do not precisely identify investigational skills development to ensure it progresses systematically, nor do they identify those pupils who could potentially achieve higher levels. ICT is insufficiently used to support science work, although Year 5 did use a CD-ROM during the inspection and results are occasionally recorded using the computer. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, but the co-ordinator has not had an active enough role in monitoring and developing the subject and is not fully aware of classroom practice. Although classrooms are expected to offer stimulating, interactive science displays, not all do.

ART AND DESIGN

124 Attainment in art meets national expectations at the end of both key stages, as at the time of the last inspection. The school follows national programmes of work. This gives pupils an appropriate curriculum as they move through the school, which is enhanced by stimulating visits to local galleries, by the involvement of local projects to promote art, and by visits from local artists who work with the pupils. This effectively supports pupils' cultural development.

125 No lessons were observed in art during the inspection, as sessions are shared with design and technology. The amount of time allocated is barely adequate. Although the school values art as an aesthetic experience, pupils have limited opportunities to consolidate the skills they require to practise art themselves. In Year 2 they record from first hand

experiences, such as the view through a camera, and develop their drawing and colouring skills as they illustrate Haiku poems for display. Pictures in the library reflect their thoughts and feelings about books they have read. Opportunities to learn about texture and form are demonstrated in bubble paintings and sponge prints of ocean creatures.

126 Overall teaching and the quality of learning are satisfactory. In Key Stage 2, these early skills are appropriately developed as pupils extend their observational drawings to include detailed pictures of mouths, noses and faces. Still life sketches are carefully drawn with shadow, tone and shading and Year 6 pupils show control in colour wash landscapes. Some of the finished products have been copied on to clay slabs, as pupils learn about different materials and techniques. An Aboriginal journey has extended pupils' knowledge of style and effect. Study of the Victorians in history has inspired some very good wallpaper swatches in the style of William Morris. Every pupil in Year 6 has completed a section of a cross-stitch sampler following a visit to the local art gallery to look at Victorian artists. A few pupils have visited the Tate Modern gallery and Bradford Moving Images museum as part of a link with a local secondary school.

127 The involvement of local companies has enabled pupils to produce some rich and detailed drawings of their dream house, which have been incorporated in to the schools' Christmas card for this year. Visiting artists enable pupils to produce imaginative displays representing the passage of time. Each class has used a digital camera to take pictures which were scanned into a computer and the images used to express the ideas of the class.

128 These rich experiences greatly enhance pupils' knowledge and appreciation, as art is enjoyed and celebrated in the school. Extensive displays are well mounted and attractive, celebrating pupils' achievements. The time allocations for the teaching of the subject are quite limited and this has an adverse effect upon the design element of activities. There is no monitoring of pupils' progress in developing key skills as assessment is based on the finished product. Specific needs are not recorded. Teaching is not monitored, although teachers evaluate their lessons briefly. Resources cover a satisfactory range and are of a good quality.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

129 Standards at the end of both key stages are broadly similar to those found in most schools, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The school uses nationally produced programmes of work, giving coherence to pupils' experiences, and the co-ordinator gives sound advice to other teachers. This is improving their expertise, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress across the school.

130 Only a small number of lessons were observed during the inspection, all in Key Stage 2. Some excellent teaching was seen in Year 4, where pupils achieve outcomes that are significantly above the expected levels for their age group. The task of designing a Christmas card with an electrical component to light up the front page is very challenging. Over a series of lessons, pupils have effectively followed the process of making realistic plans, drawing sketches and choosing the appropriate materials and tools most suited to the purpose. Pictures for the front page were generated through a computer program and pupils used literacy skills to complete the Christmas message inside their card. Pupils used their current science work on circuits to assist their understanding of the final effect of their cards. Fixing the components demanded very good concentration and perseverance, and all pupils were able to do this. A few were able to explain how they had modified their design in order to achieve the best effect. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are well supported in such lessons and this ensures their educational inclusion in these activities. Pupils are justifiably very proud of their finished products.

131 Teaching in the rest of the school is satisfactory. However, older pupils have completed only a limited amount of recent work. By Year 6, pupils are struggling to remember the work they have undertaken in earlier years, but are able to demonstrate a satisfactory grasp of key skills such as accurate measurement, following a sequence of steps and describing the purpose of their structure. Few are able to describe how to make improvements to their work on joining mechanisms, but can demonstrate that they understand the need to do this by turning the components round the right way.

132 Pupils in Key Stage 1 experience a limited range of tasks, but work seen demonstrated that they have some knowledge of designing a finger puppet and that they are learning to make judgements on the most effective ways of joining materials for this purpose. Year 1 pupils have made moving models of fish blowing bubbles, expressing positive views about the final appearance. There is a large amount of construction equipment that the pupils enjoy using in certain tasks.

133 The weekly time allocation for design and technology is shared with art, and is very limited. The co-ordinator is well qualified, with clear and appropriate views about future developments for the school. Currently there is no monitoring of teaching, but advice is given and acted upon and new planning sheets are being developed for pupils to use when following a design and make procedure. Experiences of design work are not incorporated into other areas of the curriculum in a way that benefits pupils' learning except in the co-ordinator's class. There is no appropriate record made of pupils' progress in developing skills, knowledge and understanding. Resources are barely adequate and the school has identified a pressing need to extend these.

GEOGRAPHY

134 Standards at the age of seven and eleven are broadly in line with those found in most schools. Standards have remained similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection of the school. Although pupils' knowledge is patchy, most pupils across the school, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make generally sound progress. The progress that pupils make is affected by their limited speaking skills and few are able to discuss what they have found out by using a detailed geographical vocabulary. This makes it difficult when pupils attempt to compare and contrast aspects of different localities such as the climate or even discuss the very important recent changes in their local area. It was not possible to observe geography lessons during the inspection as the subject is not a focus during this term, but is a feature of planning later in the year. However, discussion with the subject co-ordinator and a scrutiny of recent work, together with discussions with pupils, indicates reasonable coverage of the geography curriculum over the whole year. Planning is appropriately based upon national guidance for the subject.

135 The time available to plan and teach all aspects of the geography curriculum is barely adequate and restricts the progress that the pupils are capable of making. The school is very wisely considering a review of time allocations for each subject. During this term many of the older pupils study historical topics. Appropriate links are made to geography. When studying the Romans or Ancient Greeks for example pupils find out how geographical features such as the climate affected those peoples and often use maps to identify where events took place.

136 Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and are interested in finding out about their local environment and the world around them. The school is very aware that many pupils have very limited initial knowledge of anywhere beyond their immediate surroundings.

In order to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding, staff work hard to provide pupils with a range of visits into the local area and further afield, including residential visits for the older pupils. Extensive photographic evidence indicates great enjoyment of these activities and written work shows that pupils have learned much about the environment of the Swansea area or of Barmouth. These visits are very much appreciated by pupils and parents alike and considerably motivate pupils and promote the quality of their learning. Pupils' factual knowledge of the geographical features of a given place is sound but skills in geographical enquiry through asking questions of an appropriate nature are more limited.

137 In Year 1, pupils have recently found out about houses and homes. They have drawn very simple pictures of homes and labelled key features such as doors, windows and the roof. They have made satisfactory progress when drawing a simple map of their route to school. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy studying a contrasting locality of the seaside and correctly identify and label different features including cliffs, sand and a pier on a seaside poster. When using a large map of the British Isles some pupils are able to name England and locate Birmingham and seaside towns including Blackpool.

138 In Year 3, pupils identify the great oceans of the world. When studying the weather, they make satisfactory progress, identifying which areas of the United Kingdom are mild, cool, cold or very cold. Pupils appropriately identify which types of clothing they would take for a holiday in France. In Year 4, pupils extend their history work on 'Invaders and Settlers' by using a map of the United Kingdom to mark important historical sites such as Hadrian's Wall. In Year 5, pupils identify some of the main features of economic life in Ancient Greece and use simple maps to locate important towns and ports.

139 The teaching of geography is satisfactory. Activities in Key Stage 1 are suitably planned, such as the map drawing exercise in Year 1, to take account of the pupils' knowledge of their local area and then extend this further to a study of another locality such as the seaside. Some of the activities in Year 3 are not very purposeful. Asking the pupils to colour the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn for example does little to extend their understanding of the oceans of the world.

140 Geography makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. But sometimes staff miss valuable opportunities to involve pupils and their families from different ethnic groups in learning activities. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to study the beauty of the world and learn about other cultures. The sample of recent work shows only very limited use of computers to extend pupils' research or word processing skills. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The headteacher is currently acting as subject co-ordinator for an interim period whilst new staff are appointed. There are plans to raise the profile of geography across the school. There have been no recent opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the subject and this has allowed it to remain relatively under-developed recently.

HISTORY

141 Standards of attainment at the end of both key stages are similar to those found in most schools and pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. These findings indicate that standards have been maintained from the previous inspection of the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates, especially when receiving support. Whilst many pupils have speaking skills that are below average and find it difficult to explain what they know about historical events and famous people of the past, they have reasonable factual knowledge of certain historical periods and are often enthusiastic about their learning.

142 In Key Stage 1 the initial focus is on encouraging the pupils to begin to place events and objects in chronological order beginning with their own lives. For instance, in Year 1, pupils start to think about how things have changed by looking at old toys. With support they are able to make a 'toys timeline' of the things they played with when aged 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 and now. They cut and stick pictures of toys and identify an old and new doll, teddy bear and soldier, distinguishing the ones they might play with. In Year 2, pupils identify some of the changes that have occurred in their lives and know that they could not talk when they were babies. They put in order six pictures ranging from a baby to an old person.

143 History has been a focus of study this term for most pupils in Key Stage 2. Pupils study different historical periods and enjoy finding out about the type of lives previous generations of children might have led. They begin to realise that the past is represented and interpreted in various ways and offer reasons why they may not have 'first hand' evidence to support what is known. For instance, when thinking about what evidence is available from Anglo-Saxon times, pupils explain that not many historical objects have survived as they were often made of leather and wood which have turned to dust. Overall, pupils' understanding of chronology is variable and several are confused about which historical period follows which.

144 Teaching is good in Year 4 because more is expected of pupils than in some other year groups and this promotes good progress for example in finding out about Anglo-Saxon town names. Many pupils, and especially the boys, are keen to offer suggestions of town names that originated during this period, including those that end in 'ton', 'ham', 'field'. They are particularly pleased when they identify names such as Wolverhampton that include several of the Saxon 'clues'. The sample of recent work also shows good progress made when finding out about life in Roman times. They use this knowledge to identify how the Romans and Celts did things differently by comparing the types of dress, language and towns.

145 In Year 5, higher attaining pupils make good progress when learning about life and conditions in Ancient Greece and write in their own words what they know about the port of Piraeus, the Parthenon and the markets. They re-tell the myth of 'The Wonder Horse' from the perspective of a Greek or a Trojan with a good grasp of the issues. Such activities promote the development of literacy skills well. In Year 6, pupils make sound progress in learning about Victorian life. Several pupils offer reasonable detail of what life was like for Victorian children and all agree they would not want to have been sent up chimneys. However, the quality of learning of some of these pupils is affected by the immature and silly behaviour of a minority of boys who dominate discussion sessions. This affects the pace of the lesson and ineffective management of these pupils results in several quieter ones, often girls, taking little active part in discussions.

146 The overall quality of teaching is sound. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge, which enables them to offer a suitable range of background information to the historical periods studied. However, not enough use is made of a range of books or computers to encourage pupils to follow lines of enquiry. This limits the development of historical research and the ability to ask and answer questions about the past. The school is wisely considering extending such opportunities to carry out research, make presentations to the class or act out simple dramatic re-interpretations of events to support work in English.

147 The temporary subject co-ordinator is covering the management of the subject for an interim period whilst new staff are appointed. However, over a longer period of time senior staff acknowledge that there have been relatively few opportunities to monitor the quality of planning, teaching and learning in the subject and this has allowed aspects such as the under-use of ICT to develop. Resources for the subject are satisfactory, although limited use is made of the school library for research.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

148 Attainment in ICT is below expectations at the age of seven and eleven and the standards reported at the time of the last inspection have not been maintained including in word processing skills. Most of the work done by the pupils is word processing, but their skills are weak. However, with the recent completion of the ICT suite, progress is starting to improve in most areas.

149 Lower attaining Year 2 pupils select a caption and drag it to a box below a picture, although their reading skills are often a handicap even in this simple task because they do not necessarily match the correct pairs. Pupils with more advanced reading skills type their own captions, but their ICT skills are often very limited. For example, one pair of pupils search the keyboard for a lower case 'g' while another pair cannot find the full stop. They are easily fazed by unexpected results such as when the computer enlarges or reduces text boxes, like their older schoolmates. They have very few strategies for reversing unwanted actions.

150 Most girls in Year 6 re-order paragraphs by highlighting and pasting to a different place and are able to edit their work using cut and paste functions in their lesson. However, a significant number are so lacking in confidence that they cannot do this and at worst they end up losing parts of the text and have no strategies for restoring what they have inadvertently deleted. Because of this lack of confidence, they laboriously re-type sections. Year 4 pupils are mostly able to select a clipart picture and insert it into a pre-typed text, some of them changing the size of the graphics to fit the available space. The majority are not, however, confident about doing this unaided, and this lack of confidence also extends to basic skills such as locating and opening files.

151 The ICT skills of pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs are often commensurate with their peers, but the progress of all pupils is slow. They do not recall what they have done in lessons and have too little practice between their weekly sessions to retain the skills they have been taught. Because there is no assessment system, pupils are often not working at the correct level to build their ICT skills systematically and this is exacerbated by poor literacy and listening skills.

152 The teaching of ICT is currently satisfactory overall, but over a period of time has been restricted by the lack of available computers and hardware. In the two lessons observed being taught by school staff during the inspection teaching was good. However, not all teachers are confident with the technology and do not always provide the immediate support required to ensure pupils make best progress. For instance, where a pupil was having difficulty seeing the text, the adult helped by changing the font size, which then quickly filled the text box. A better strategy would have been to change the view to 100 per cent instead of the 75 per cent which was displayed. While teachers attempt to match the work they set to pupils' reading levels, this does not always match expertise in ICT.

153 Although teachers often have support assistants in the ICT suite, pupils do not always receive timely support because so many of them require help simultaneously. The work that the teacher has planned is not therefore appropriate for the pupils' level of computer skills. Teachers demonstrate new procedures effectively and give clear instructions on how to carry out the task, often providing written prompts for pupils to follow if they forget a procedure. Pupils are often too excited about the prospect of using the computer that they do not pay enough attention, though, and prefer to request help when they cannot proceed rather than remembering what they have heard or using the written prompts. When infant pupils are unsupervised while using the computer they often hit keys randomly instead of responding to

verbal or picture cues on the screen because they do not understand the basic working of the machine.

154 The school has a problem in providing appropriately for ICT because of shortcomings in the equipment. Many difficulties arise with the operation of the machines in the suite. During the inspection only a few machines were satisfactorily linked to the one on which the teacher was demonstrating, which made it more difficult for pupils to see and concentrate. Pupils work could not always be printed because of equipment failure. Pupils are rarely able to access suitable computers to practise and apply their newly acquired skills. Nevertheless, the school could do more to provide useful practice on the machines which are available and ensure that programs are progressively more challenging. ICT is not integrated into all the work pupils do across the curriculum so that it is seen as a powerful and useful tool for learning. The girls do not have the same opportunity as the boys to work with a visiting teacher to produce a music CD-Rom. However, teachers are planning skills which are relevant to literacy work and which could help to improve in reading and writing. However, work in Year 6 enabled pupils to edit a review of the Harry Potter film. Year 4 pupils were also motivated to create laminated place mats for nursery children. Lengthy preparation ensured the pupils could work on these tasks effectively.

155 The ICT curriculum is unbalanced. The school has recently become very aware of the need to monitor provision to ensure equality of opportunity. Because Year 3 pupils are in a temporary classroom security measures make it impossible to provide a classroom computer, and even where these are available the software from the main suite is not compatible. Pupils spend a great deal of time on word processing, but little on data handling and even less on control even though these strands would enhance numeracy and science provision. Seeking information through the Internet and e-mail are also underdeveloped in the daily curriculum although older pupils are aware of the potential. Year 6 pupils are allowed to use the computers outside lessons, which encourages them to feel more confident. However, not all take advantage of this so the least confident do not necessarily benefit and the activities do not improve skills. While the co-ordinator is tackling some of the shortcomings in provision and staff are receiving appropriate training through the New Opportunities Fund initiative, not enough is being done to ensure resources are available to give pupils their entitlement to a full ICT curriculum.

MUSIC

156 Class music was only observed in Years 1, 5 and 6, but all pupils were observed during singing practices and additional evidence was also gained from a discussion with Year 6 pupils. Attainment in music is below expectations at the end of both key stages. There is only limited evidence that pupils have had experience of all relevant areas of the music curriculum, including the composition of simple pieces of music. The standards in music at the time of the last inspection have not been maintained.

157 Pupils throughout the school sing quite tunefully and can adjust their singing to suit the mood of the song, such as a gentle rendition of 'Away in a Manger'. However, they are not always confident performers even in class groups. In Year 1, pupils select appropriate sound-effects to use in the story *We're going on a Bear Hunt*, but have limited imagination to develop ideas about suitable ones to represent the different events such as a snowstorm. A few infant pupils play a series of repeated notes and a glissando on the glockenspiel to accompany the singing, but they have to be shown how to create a clear ringing sound first.

158 While Year 6 pupils are beginning to recognise some of the elements of standard staff notation and can eventually copy a common time rhythm clapped by the teacher, they are not confident about using percussion instruments. They have little idea of how to set

about composing or appraising any music, especially as they do not have the technical vocabulary to discuss what they hear. Pupils in Year 5 find it difficult to hold their part in a simple two-part round. They are not all confident about keeping a steady pulse when accompanying the song on a glockenspiel. Pupils' knowledge of the work of famous composers is limited.

159 The teaching of music is generally satisfactory, although one unsatisfactory lesson was observed in Key Stage 2 when unsuitable work was provided for the pupils. Over time, however, teachers' lack of confidence in the subject leads to irregular progress for all pupils. The large groups for key stage sessions provide limited opportunities to develop singing. In most lessons teachers' general skills enable them to manage the pupils well, provide appropriate activities and organise the lesson so that it runs smoothly. They are mostly supportive of pupils' efforts and provide praise and encouragement. However, they do not have high enough expectations and often fail to pinpoint the precise elements which would lead to improvement and provide appropriate practice in those skills so pupils' efforts to improve are focused. Because of this, the pace of music lessons is often slow and pupils lose interest and concentration, or, at worst, begin to behave poorly.

160 Although school-wide planning exists to support teachers, the Year 6 lesson observed was not part of this scheme of work. The pupils have not actually experienced a structured and progressive programme to introduce and develop skills in performing, composing and appraising. As a result, pupils do not have the understanding of musical structure or the vocabulary to discuss any ideas they have. The progress of all pupils is, therefore, unsatisfactory. There is a shortage of resources for teaching music. In lessons only a few pupils have the opportunity to play an untuned percussion instrument or a glockenspiel. The supply of recorded music for listening and appraising is also limited. Provision is enhanced by opportunities to learn violin or a brass instrument and by visitors who provide recitals and concerts, although there are currently no after-school music clubs. Pupils have appropriate chances to perform in productions.

161 The co-ordinator is new to the post and has only just begun to review the existing situation. Much help will be required from senior staff, therefore, to improve provision and raise standards. Currently the school does not make enough use of ICT to improve the skills of musical composition.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

162 Standards of attainment in physical education are similar to those found in most schools and are broadly similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. The emphasis on improvement in the core subjects has restricted curriculum development but there has been considerable improvement in the range of extra-curricular opportunities offered to pupils. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress.

163 There was little opportunity to observe teaching during the inspection and only two elements of the curriculum for physical education were observed. Teaching is usually satisfactory at both key stages, but was unsatisfactory on one occasion in Key Stage 1. Teaching is satisfactory when the teacher exercises sound class management, demonstrates good subject knowledge and explains clearly the learning intentions for the lesson. In Year 1, the teacher makes effective use of the school behaviour strategy to deal with interruptions. The pupils understand the vocabulary 'space', 'direction', 'near' and 'far' and are successful in composing a simple dance routine. Teaching is also satisfactory when the teacher plans well and effectively uses pupils to demonstrate the quality of movement required. In Year 3, the majority of pupils sustain their interest and are able to link together body shapes and balances in a gymnastic movement. In both examples the pupils are

appropriately dressed for the activities. When class control is less than satisfactory and the behaviour of pupils is poor, teaching is judged to be unsatisfactory.

164 The curriculum is well balanced and, although only gymnastics and dance were seen at the time of the inspection, the other elements are present in teachers' planning. All the pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to learn to swim and most make good progress by the time they leave the school although not all attain the expected 25 metre competence. Pupils learn the skills of major sports and also take part in athletics, although there are few opportunities to take part in competitive sports activities. In Year 6, they experience a five-day residential visit to Parc-le-Broes where they successfully take part in outdoor pursuits. Football, basketball and cross-country running are offered as extra-curricular activities and are well attended. Resources are adequate to support the curriculum and, though the school hall is rather small, the playground provides a spacious hard surface for outdoor games. The school is fortunate in having an adjacent playing field to the school. A newly qualified teacher who is trained in physical education and who has a vision for future development of the curriculum has begun to manage the curriculum. Leadership and management are currently satisfactory and there are plans to extend the monitoring and evaluation of standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

165 Standards of attainment at both key stages are broadly in line with the expectations of the Birmingham Agreed Syllabus as they were in the previous inspection. Since the time of the last inspection the scheme of work for religious education has been updated. This provides themes common to all religions that are appropriate for pupils from a wide variety of faiths. Pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, as do pupils for whom English is an additional language. This is not only achieved through focused support, but also because religious themes are often studied through art, music and other practical activities. These findings indicate standards have been maintained since the previous inspection of the school.

166 In Year 1 pupils offer thanks to God through words and music. They also make Rangoli patterns and, at the appropriate time of year, they study the festival of Diwali. The Year 2 pupils investigate the signs and symbols that represent Christian ceremonies. In Year 3, they think about the meaning behind the story of the prodigal son and consider the ways in which humans differ from animals. In the following year pupils celebrate the traditional harvest festival and become acquainted with the symbols and vocabulary of Judaism. In Year 5, foods from different religions are investigated and also the religious objects important to people of the Sikh religion. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own feelings by asking the question "To whom do I belong?"

167 Teaching is generally satisfactory at both key stages and good at the end of Key Stage 2. It is satisfactory when the resources are well prepared and individuals are encouraged to explore their feelings about characters in a story. In this way the pupils from Year 1 learn the meaning of the Diwali festival of light. Teaching is good when pupils from Year 6 direct previously prepared questions to visitors belonging to the Muslim faith. The sensitive organisation of the interview allows pupils to participate fully and to deepen their knowledge of Muslim belief through discussion and the examination of genuine religious objects. The teacher shows good management skills and her pupils sustain their concentration throughout the lesson. The attitude of pupils is good at Key Stage 2 but sometimes unsatisfactory at Key Stage 1 where pupils struggle to maintain concentration.

168 There are a variety of books to support the curriculum in religious education and other resources such as videos, photo packs and religious objects are sufficient in number and quality. The subject co-ordinator is planning to extend the existing resources. Whole school

and class assemblies also make their contribution to the development of the subject. These are used to celebrate religious events such as Advent and to give thanks through prayer and music. They also provide pupils with the opportunities to listen to stories from the different religions and to reflect on moral dilemmas. Leadership and management of the subject is good with strengths in the development of work on different religious faiths. However, assessment is informal and there are only limited opportunities to monitor standards and progress across the school. As yet the school does not make enough use of computers to extend learning and research activities across the subject.