

INSPECTION REPORT

COURT FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Erdington, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103267

Headteacher: Mrs Marie Nolan

Reporting inspector: Mr Andy Bond
17263

Dates of inspection: 11th-14th March 2002

Inspection number: 244673

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Tedbury Crescent Erdington Birmingham
Postcode:	B23 5NS
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S Buck
Date of previous inspection:	10 th November 1997

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17263	Andy Bond	Registered inspector	History Geography Physical education	What sort of school is it? How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed
9928	Alan Dobson	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How the school works in partnership with parents
22805	Jo Greer	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Design and technology	Assessment
1189	Sharon Brown	Team inspector	English Music Art and design English as an additional language	Equal opportunities Special educational needs
12172	Wendy Knight	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education Information and communication technology	How good are curricular and other opportunities? Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Court Farm Primary School is a community school located in Erdington, which is a suburb of Birmingham. It largely serves children from a local housing estate. It is smaller than most other primary schools and caters for pupils between the ages of 4 and 11. The number of pupils attending the school has fallen in recent years. At present there are 150 pupils; 69 boys 81 girls. There is a high level of pupil mobility, and only about a half of the pupils who enter the reception class receive a full education in the school. The vast majority of pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds but a small percentage of pupils have black Caribbean backgrounds. There is a very small percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language; none of these pupils are at an early stage of acquiring English. Over 40 per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs and this is well above average. The majority of these pupils have difficulties with basic literacy and some have behavioural problems. There are three pupils with statements of special educational needs. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 60 per cent, which is well above the national average. The school is involved in the 'Excellence in Cities' project, which provides financial support for the school to employ a learning mentor who monitors school attendance. The attainment of children when they enter the reception class varies from year to year but is generally well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Court Farm is a school that gives pupils a sound education. Pupils attain average standards by the end of Key Stage 2, but compared with similar schools attainment is well above average. Pupils generally make good progress through the school. The quality of teaching and learning is generally sound throughout the school but in Years 2 and 6 it is good. The headteacher manages the school well and gives dedicated leadership. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress through the school, especially in English, mathematics and science. Standards are generally well above average compared with similar schools.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 2 and 6 is good.
- Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and make good progress.
- The curriculum is enriched by a good range of interesting activities, such as visits to places of interest and after-school clubs.
- There are very effective care systems in place to look after pupils.
- The school has made good progress since the last inspection.

What could be improved

- Reading standards throughout the school.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and its use throughout the school.
- The learning experiences for children in the reception class and pupils in Year 1.
- The effectiveness of the systems for monitoring teaching and learning.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents and carers of children in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1997. Since that time, the school has made good progress in addressing the areas of weakness identified in the report. Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen significantly in Key Stage 2 over the last four years. A far higher percentage of pupils are reaching average and above average levels in these subjects. Assessment procedures are now established and are being used to inform planning much more effectively. Lessons now identify clearly what is to be learnt by pupils and the higher attaining pupils generally receive more challenging tasks. Music standards have improved and are now judged to be average. Teachers with specialist expertise in

various subjects are used more frequently. Senior staff and co-ordinators are given more opportunities to monitor standards in teaching and learning but the system is not rigorous enough to have a worthwhile impact on school improvement.

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	D	E	C	A
Mathematics	C	D	B	A
Science	C	D	A	A

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

The table sets out the Year 6 results in National Curriculum tests for 2001. They show that results were average for English, above average for mathematics and well above average for science. Compared with similar schools, the results in all three subjects were well above average. The inspection judgements for the standards achieved by the present Year 6 pupils are slightly different from last year's group of pupils in that they are average in English, mathematics and science.

Last year, standards in National Curriculum tests and tasks at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading and writing were well below average; in mathematics they were also well below average. In science, teachers' assessment indicated that standards were well below average. The present Year 2 pupils are judged to be attaining slightly higher standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science, but these are still below average.

Girls generally achieve higher standards than boys in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 but in Key Stage 2 the standards achieved by boys are better than girls and have improved quite markedly in recent years. However, it is difficult to draw accurate conclusions from test result information on gender because of high levels of pupil mobility and the relatively small size of year groups.

The children in the reception class enter school with generally well below average attainment and make sound progress, but the majority are not on course to reach the expected levels by the time they begin in Year 1. Standards are improving steadily in English, mathematics and science in the infants and rapidly, well above the national trend, in the juniors. Standards in all other subjects are average at the end of Years 2 and 6 except for ICT, which is below average.

The school has quite ambitious targets for eleven-year-olds in National Curriculum tests in English and mathematics in 2002. They hope to see a further improvement of between 3% and 5%.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Sound. Pupils like school and are keen to be involved in lessons. However, they have to be motivated by teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons, at lunchtime and in the playground because the school has good behaviour management systems.

Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils get on well with each other. Older pupils have extra responsibilities, which they carry out well.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is well below the national average and has not improved.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning are sound throughout the school. The vast majority of lessons are judged to be satisfactory or better. Only a small number of lessons are judged to be unsatisfactory, largely because pupils become too restless and teachers find it difficult to keep them on task for the whole of the lesson. Almost a half of all lessons are good or very good. There is consistently good teaching in Years 2 and 6. Teachers generally manage pupils well and have a sound understanding of pupils' needs. They form good relationships with their classes and use good strategies to encourage pupils to do their best. Teachers ensure that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are improved soundly. In the juniors homework is used effectively to increase pupils' learning. Classroom assistants support pupils well, especially those with special educational needs. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught thoroughly and used effectively in other subjects to consolidate and improve pupils' learning. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use ICT in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound overall. The curriculum is enriched by visits to places of interest and extra-curricular activities. The curriculum for reception children and pupils in Year 1 is not entirely suitable for these age groups. Activities are not properly structured to meet their needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and generally make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The very small number of pupils in the juniors for whom English is an additional language are well supported by teachers and make good progress, just like their classmates.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound. Social education is catered for particularly well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school cares effectively for pupils. A safe and secure school environment has been created. There are very good systems for monitoring and promoting good attendance but levels are still low. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good.

Parents have a good opinion of the school. The school welcomes parents, but only a very small number help in school. The quality of information provided by the school to parents is satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Sound overall. The headteacher provides dedicated leadership and manages the school well. She receives valuable support from senior staff. A good level of improvement has been achieved under her leadership. Subject co-ordinators fulfil their roles properly but need further opportunities to develop their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Sound. The governors have a clear understanding of the challenges facing the school. They are involved in shaping the direction of the school and meet statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Sound. The school evaluates its own performance well in many areas, particularly in analysing test results. However, the systems for the monitoring of teaching and learning are insufficiently developed.
The strategic use of resources	Sound. The school uses its financial resources properly to develop priorities and raise standards. The school is retaining too much unallocated funds in its budget, although there are some good reasons for this. The school has a sound understanding of how to get the best value from its resources.

The school has sufficient, appropriately qualified staff, although it does have difficulty in recruiting new teachers. There are a good number of classroom assistants who make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Learning resources are sound. The accommodation is adequate but the Year 1 and reception classes are too isolated in a building at the far side of a playground.

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 their child likes school • The approachability and accessibility of the headteacher and the staff • That the school has high expectations of their child • The way the school helps their child to become mature and responsible • The good progress their child makes and the good quality of teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more interesting range of activities outside lessons

The inspection team agree with these positive views of parents, although teaching is judged by inspectors to be mainly satisfactory. The inspectors think, given the size of school, that the range of activities outside lessons is good and therefore do not agree with the views expressed by a small percentage of parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Children enter the reception class (Foundation Stage) with generally well below average levels of attainment for their age. There are variations from year to year, depending on the particular groups of children joining the school. The school's own baseline¹ assessment supports this judgement. Overall, children make sound progress in the reception class but the majority are not expected to achieve the national learning goals by the end of the school year in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. In the areas of personal, social and emotional development and physical development, children are on course to reach the expected levels by the end of the reception year. Although teaching and learning are generally sound, there are weaknesses in the teachers' planning and assessment practices which means that the children are not exposed to well directed and stimulating activities. This is particularly evident in the teaching of creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world, where children could make better progress.

2 At the end of Key Stage 1, the results from the National Curriculum tests for 2001, showed that pupils attained well below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Only a small percentage of pupils reached the above average levels in reading and mathematics and no pupil was above average in writing. A high percentage of pupils, in the region of 38 per cent, achieved at the below average level in reading and writing. However, when compared to similar schools the results showed that attainment levels were above average for mathematics, average for writing and below average for reading. Since 1998, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been rising steadily at the end of Key Stage 1, but mobility levels and poor attendance tend to slow the rate of progress because some pupils' education is affected by a lack of continuity. In science, teacher assessments in 2001 showed that standards were well below average.

3 Inspection evidence shows that standards in the present Year 2 class are slightly higher than 2001 test results because inspectors' judgements indicate that below average standards are being achieved in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The number of pupils in the current class is smaller and there is a smaller percentage of lower attaining pupils, which means that overall standards are slightly better.

4 Pupils generally make sound progress throughout the whole key stage but the good quality of teaching in Year 2 has a positive impact on raising standards towards the end of Key Stage 1.

5 At the end of Key Stage 2 the National Curriculum test results for 2001 showed that pupils attained average standards in English, above average standards in mathematics and well above average standards in science. A high proportion of pupils were reaching above average national standards; in mathematics 31 per cent and in science 50 per cent. This indicates that higher attainers are being challenged to meet their full potential. Compared with similar schools results were well above average in all three subjects. Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen significantly since the last inspection. Each year since 1998 the school has gradually climbed towards the national average and has now exceeded it in mathematics and science.

¹ A system of assessing children's level of performance when they begin school.

6 Inspection judgements show that pupils currently in Year 6 are reaching average standards in English, mathematics and science. Reading standards are below average because many pupils have underdeveloped strategies for breaking down words and interpreting information from written text. In mathematics, although high attainers are confident at solving problems presented in sentence form, other pupils in the age group find this activity difficult. In science pupils' knowledge and understanding are very good but investigative skills are not as strong. However, the school's 'booster' strategies are well honed and there are still opportunities before National Curriculum tests in the summer term for pupils to reach higher standards than are presently achieved.

7 The improvement in standards is the result of good school analysis of test results in Year 6 which identify areas of weakness in pupils' understanding and knowledge. There is well targeted teaching to address these perceived weaknesses, especially in the booster groups in English and mathematics, which are undertaken each school day in Year 6. A high proportion of the school day is allocated to mathematics and English prior to national tests, so that pupils receive regular practice to improve their performance. In science, teaching is concentrated and pupils develop a very good scientific knowledge. The standard of teaching is also consistently good in the Year 6 class, which promotes good quality learning. Progress is generally good in Key Stage 2 because of the accelerated learning in Year 6.

8 There are minor differences in the test results of boys and girls but they are not significant. Girls do better than boys in Key Stage 1 tests and boys generally do better than girls in Key Stage 2 tests. Year groups are comparatively small and the mobility of pupils is high so that no discernible pattern is emerging.

9 The school has developed good assessment systems, which plot pupils' progress through the school. It also enables teachers to set specific targets for pupils to aim for. This is a growing practice in the school and should help to promote higher standards. The school has ambitious targets for Key Stage 2 test results in 2002. It hopes to raise standards by a further three per cent in mathematics and five per cent in English for those pupils reaching average and above average levels.

10 Whilst there is a well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the quality of provision for these pupils is good and they make good progress in their work. The individual education plans have specific targets so that work provided is closely matched to individual needs. Taking into account their low attainment on entry, the achievement of these pupils towards their specific targets is good. Most enjoy their activities and have good attitudes to learning.

11 The very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well. There is good attention to inclusion to ensure that the needs of such pupils are being met through the curriculum. The pupils concerned have a good command of English and require no additional support. They make good progress and are among the more able pupils in school. Similarly, the small proportion of Caribbean pupils have access to the same curriculum as other pupils and make the same progress as others in the class.

12 By the end of Key Stage 1, in English, speaking and listening standards are average. Teachers give pupils many opportunities to speak in lessons. Although they do not have an enriched vocabulary they are confident and respond well to questions with quite detailed answers. Higher attaining pupils are expressive readers in Year 2 but average and lower attaining pupils tend to read 'word by word' and lack fluency and expression. Many pupils make calculated guesses at words supported by the initial letter sound or a picture clue. In writing, pupils use simple punctuation accurately but have difficulties with spelling. A significant number of pupils do not have a wide range of strategies when attempting to spell a

word. Most pupils are writing in a variety of styles, such as composing poems, news items and using 'speech bubbles'.

13 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils use speaking and listening skills well, offering opinions and reading aloud in class. Standards are average. Although pupils have made good progress in English there are still a good number who have difficulties with reading. The most able are articulate and discuss reading preferences, based on their reading experiences but some average and lower attaining pupils do not have well developed skills to enable them to break down words into syllables. However, all pupils are familiar with dictionaries and use alphabetical order effectively. They understand the purposes of an index and a glossary and use the library system efficiently to locate a book. Although many pupils enjoy works of fiction they are less interested in non-fiction books. In Year 6 pupils write reviews, play scripts, newspaper reports and stories. Higher attainers write in a lively, interesting style, using imaginative ideas. Teachers provide relevant, interesting topics which help to improve pupils' writing. Some average and lower attaining pupils struggle with more complex spelling patterns. Handwriting standards are variable. Most write in a cursive style but others are less tidy and precise in their presentation of handwriting.

14 In mathematics, Year 2 pupils are below average; they have well developed mental arithmetic skills and add numbers up to 20 with confidence. They recognise odd and even numbers and count in twos and tens. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty in understanding the concept of tallying numbers and it is only with classroom assistants' support that they can complete tasks. Year 6 pupils are operating at a broadly average level. They use all four operations² to solve problems and find suitable ways of fitting the correct number into sequences, often by using a calculator. Average and below average attainers have difficulty with some written problems because they lack confidence. Most pupils make accurate calculations when using decimals and percentages. Pupils understand negative numbers, square number and square roots.

15 In science, at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils achieve below average standards. More able pupils understand what makes a fair test and apply this in an experiment. Less able pupils have difficulty explaining a simple experiment either in written or oral form. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are average. Pupils have a very good factual knowledge and understanding of scientific topics. They know that to see an object, light must travel from the source and be reflected from the object into the eye. However, more able pupils' ability to analyse results of experiments and make suitable deductions is limited, though they record results independently. Pupils apply their knowledge well in electricity to make battery-powered wheeled vehicles.

16 Standards in all others subjects are average at the end of both key stages. The only exception is information and communication technology (ICT) which is below average at both key stages. Standards are lower because teachers' expertise is not so strong and suitable equipment has only recently been available for pupils to use. Too few opportunities are given to pupils to use their skills in other subjects on a regular basis. However, it is an improving picture because staff are receiving specific training and there are plans to increase the school stock of software.

17 Pupils make sound progress in all subjects in both key stages, taking into account their prior levels of attainment except for ICT, where progress is slower than is normally expected.

² Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

18 The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved in English, mathematics and science, steadily in Key Stage 1 and rapidly by the end of Key Stage 2.

19 Standards have been maintained in all other subjects, except in ICT which was judged to be average at the time of the last inspection. In reality national expectations in this subject are now much higher, following changes in National Curriculum requirements. The school has made adequate improvement recently by purchasing new equipment and providing training for teachers. In music, standards were judged to be below average at the end of both key stages. The position has now been improved as there is a better curriculum in place and teachers' confidence has increased through training. More specialist teaching has also been introduced in order to raise standards in the subject.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20 Pupils' attitudes to school life and to learning are satisfactory. Their behaviour is good overall. Relationships are good and whilst at the school pupils develop well in terms of confidence and accepting responsibilities. These judgements are similar to those made at the previous inspection.

21 Pupils like the school, a fact confirmed by parents and pupils alike. Most pupils understand they are at school to learn and are generally keen to be involved in lessons. However, the majority of pupils do not have an innate enthusiasm for learning – they have to be motivated. When the teaching is good, pupils are involved and engaged in the subject and work hard. For instance in a Year 4 history lesson, each pupil was given an envelope containing a fact about Henry VIII. Each in turn had to open their envelope (giving a sense of surprise) and read the fact aloud, for example 'he understood Greek' or 'he liked hunting'. These facts were discussed with real interest by the class in the context of Tudor times and then each pupil had to categorise all the facts into what Henry knew, what he physically looked like and what his hobbies were. The pupils thought it was fun, but by the end of the lesson they had a very secure background on the sort of person Henry was. Pupils generally take a pride in their work and are keen to talk about what they have learnt.

22 Behaviour is good overall because the behaviour management systems generally work. Pupils understand the rules and think they are fair. Classrooms are mostly quiet and conducive to learning; however there are a few challenging pupils throughout the school. In a small number of lessons, some disruption was observed, due primarily to the lack of firm management by the teacher. Movement around the school is orderly. Behaviour in the dining room is good. In assembly pupils are quiet, attentive and respectful during prayers. The playgrounds have a friendly atmosphere and pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils express confidence in the staff's ability to sort out any bullying problems, usually name-calling, quickly and effectively. There have been two temporary exclusions in the last year, both concerning the same pupil.

23 Relationships in the school are good. Pupils get on well with each other and with adults in the school. They are polite and courteous to visitors. In lessons, they collaborate well and as they get older, pupils are prepared to listen and respect each other's opinions. Pupils are mindful of the needs of others and raise considerable funds for charities. Extra responsibilities are welcomed by the pupils throughout the school, although most opportunities do not occur until they are in Year 6, for instance operating equipment during assemblies or playing with infants during the lunch break. Homework is taken seriously, but a lack of research opportunities is hampering the development of the pupils' skills in learning independently. School clubs are very popular. By Year 6, most pupils are confident, sensible and have sound conversational skills.

24 Children in the reception class, although lacking some confidence, soon adapt to school life. They play well together and share toys and equipment. Their behaviour is generally good. They are keen to tidy up at the end of a session and put equipment away sensibly.

25 The attendance rate is poor compared with primary schools nationally and has not improved since the previous inspection. This is unsatisfactory. Unauthorised absence is similar to that found nationally. Punctuality is satisfactory and registers are called promptly. Lessons start on time after registration, but there is some minor slippage during the day, particularly as a result of assemblies over-running.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26 Teaching and learning throughout the school are judged to be sound overall. There are variations in the quality, however, which is dependent upon the skills of individual teachers and the composition and attitudes of pupils within each class. The high mobility of pupils and the low attendance levels do have the effect of slowing down pupils' learning rates because their education is not continuous. During the inspection period, 93 per cent of teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better and seven per cent of lessons observed were less than satisfactory. The small percentage of unsatisfactory and poor teaching is either the result of unsuccessful management strategies or teachers' failure to give pupils clear directions about what they need to learn. This results in slow learning and pupils becoming restless. Pupils are often confused because they do not know what is expected of them and insufficient work is completed in the time available.

27 In 44 per cent of lessons teaching and learning are good or better. In most lessons teachers employ good strategies to manage pupils. They have a good rapport with the class and give praise and encouragement which raises the esteem of pupils. Homework is given on a regular basis, especially in Key Stage 2 and this makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Teaching and learning are particularly good in Years 2 and 6 and this has the effect of raising standards at the end of each key stage and boosting results in National Curriculum tests.

28 The quality of teaching and learning as reported at the last inspection, has been maintained. Satisfactory or better teaching is exactly the same and good or better teaching remains fairly similar with almost 50 per cent of lessons in this category. The areas for improvement have been addressed, in that teachers have a good understanding of the next stages of learning because their assessment techniques have improved. Identified learning objectives also make it clear to pupils what they are expected to gain from the lesson. Generally, the brightest pupils are challenged in lessons. The higher attaining pupils are reaching much higher standards than four years ago, especially at the end of Key Stage 2. The teaching of music has improved because specialist teaching takes place, either through peripatetic support or by using the most knowledgeable teachers to deliver lessons. The National Literacy Framework guidelines have been implemented successfully and they have made a positive impact on the teaching of English and planning of lessons in other subjects. Numeracy skills are also properly developed in other subjects, although they are often unplanned.

29 In the Foundation Stage teaching and learning are generally sound. The teacher has a good relationship with children and provides the wide range of appropriate learning experiences for children of this age. Classroom assistance is effective in supporting children and the basic skills are taught properly. However, there are shortcomings in the planning,

which is not sufficiently detailed and children are not given enough guidance in activity sessions. This means that educational play activities lead to only minimal learning.

30 Levels of attainment in Year 1 are much lower than would normally be expected at this age. Although there are a small number of higher attaining pupils who are properly catered for by the teacher, learning tends to be slower because of the immaturity of these pupils. For some pupils, a formal curriculum is unsuitable and a more practical curriculum would be far more appropriate in laying the basis for their long-term development. The teacher gives clear explanations so that pupils know what they are supposed to do. Learning resources are used effectively and the teacher is supported well by the classroom assistant. Teaching and learning are sound overall in this age group.

31 In Year 2, teaching is consistently good and pupils make good gains in their learning. In an art and design lesson to develop collage work, the planning is carefully tailored to meet the needs of different groups and a clear target is shared with pupils. Tasks are interesting and challenging. Adult support is well deployed and independent work is encouraged. The atmosphere within the class is relaxed, yet the lesson moves along at a good pace and much is completed in the time available.

32 In Key Stage 2 teaching is slightly better overall than in other stages. A greater percentage of lessons are judged to be good. Learning is also better. The solid teaching earlier in the school has given pupils the basic skills, knowledge and understanding on which to build further productive learning. Achievement levels also improve towards the end of the key stage. Mobility levels tend to decline and the quality of teaching improves, being particularly strong in Year 6. The school's booster group strategy also provides well targeted teaching to small groups of pupils in English and mathematics lessons. The distinct focus on the teaching of scientific knowledge also contributes to raising standards.

33 The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are generally taught soundly. In a Year 4 class the teacher uses the whiteboards effectively. She encourages pupils to show their calculations and explain their methods of working. She makes it clear that no one method is the right one and that pupils should draw on their reasoning skills to arrive at an accurate answer. Similarly, in a Year 3 English lesson the teacher explains clearly the use of alphabetical order and provides well matched tasks to increase pupils' understanding. There are good examples of basic skills being reinforced in other subjects, such as writing as an eyewitness in Victorian or Tudor times or compiling statistical information from a transport survey in geography. However, ICT is not used sufficiently in lessons to develop pupils' skills and support their learning. Although teachers' expertise is improving there is still some lack of confidence and limited availability of suitable software resources to extend pupils in this area.

34 Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers know their pupils well, most planning activities that are matched to their needs, especially in English and mathematics. Classroom learning support assistants play an important role in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs benefit from an appropriate range of activities and make good progress in learning against prior levels of understanding. Where pupils are withdrawn by the special educational needs co-ordinator, teaching is good. Work is carefully matched to targets set in individual education plans for improvement in English. There are times where the work in classrooms is not as well matched to individual needs as it might be because it is not planned with direct reference to pupils' individual education plans. When this is the case, it is reflected in pupils' learning and their attention in the lesson.

35 Teaching and learning are judged to be sound in all subjects. There are some examples of good, exciting teaching in history, religious education and art and design but the sample of lessons is too small to make an overall judgement.

36 The quality of teaching and learning is monitored by the headteacher and senior staff. Evidence from the evaluation shows that teachers are given advice on how to improve their teaching. However, the system is not sufficiently structured and rigorously enough applied to raise the quality of teaching of all staff to the level of the best practitioners.

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

37 The school provides an appropriate statutory curriculum. Although the learning experiences for reception pupils are broadly planned to nationally agreed Early Learning Goals the curriculum does not take account of children's limited experiences and is not always appropriate and well matched for their current needs. Likewise, the provision for Year 1 pupils, whose skills and experiences are still limited, is not always relevant to the particular pupils in the group. Long lessons with formal class methods do not suit a significant proportion of the pupils and are not helping them to make best progress.

38 The curriculum for Years 2 - 6 includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. There are useful cross-curricular links such as a history topic being used in an ICT lesson in Year 5. In this lesson the Internet was searched for information on the Victorians. However, this was an exception because ICT is generally not regularly integrated into work in other subjects. Literacy and numeracy skills are suitably practised in other subjects, for example factual reporting is developed in religious education. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been appropriately adopted in English and mathematics lessons, and booster support in three groups in Year 6 is particularly effective in ensuring pupils achieve expected skill levels before transferring to secondary school. There is a suitable programme for health education which includes consideration of sex education and drugs awareness, and personal education is well promoted, mainly through religious education. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are thoroughly planned to provide a balance of opportunities to be creative and physically, as well as intellectually, active. During the approach to national tests, however, Year 6 pupils spend a much higher percentage of their time on English and mathematics. Although the timetabled allocation meets the recommended minimum for junior pupils, in practice time is lost, particularly through assemblies which over-run, and this reduces actual lesson time to just below the minimum recommended level.

39 There are clear guidelines for responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Clear procedures are in place and they follow closely the national guidance for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs. The information gained is put to good effect in providing work for pupils in small groups, either when taken out of class or when they are being given the same curricular opportunities as others in the classroom. Individual education plans are provided for all pupils who have significant needs, and these are of good quality, although targets are limited mainly to English and to behaviour. They are regularly reviewed. Pupils with statements are provided with suitable support, in line with national requirements. During the inspection good use was made of ICT by the special educational needs co-ordinator to enrich the learning experienced for pupils withdrawn for support. However, this was not always reflected in the classroom. The good provision identified in the previous inspection has been maintained.

40 The school does not make any additional provision for talented and gifted pupils, other than matched work for higher attaining pupils. However, after-school clubs and peripatetic music lessons do offer some opportunities for more talented and gifted pupils to reach higher standards in their particular areas of interest.

41 Provision for equality of opportunity is satisfactory. In the main, the school ensures that all pupils have opportunities to access the full range of learning opportunities provided. However, a small number of pupils are withdrawn from religious education lessons for literacy support. Boys and girls work well together and achieve similar results. Occasionally, boys were seen to have a dominant role when accessing the computers in ICT lessons. Careful monitoring is required to ensure that girls and boys have equal access to such resources. They participate equally in out of school activities. Good use is made of support staff to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are able to participate in all activities. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, and the small proportion of Caribbean pupils, have access to the same curriculum and make the same progress as others in their class.

42 Provision for extra-curricular activities and community links enhances the curriculum. This area has been improved since the last inspection. There are many trips and visitors to support learning in most of the National Curriculum subjects, and these include involvement with local businesses and attention to the local environment. During the inspection, for instance, a minister from the local United Reformed Church led the introduction to a religious education lesson in Year 6. Junior pupils are offered a good range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, which include sport, music, art and craft, ICT and French, while infant pupils may borrow mathematics games to support their learning. Peripatetic woodwind lessons are also available. Older pupils have useful opportunities to take part in residential visits including outdoor pursuits and chances to experience a rural locality. Suitable links are made with the secondary schools to which most pupils transfer at the end of Year 6.

43 There is sound provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with strengths in opportunities within social areas. This provision has been broadly maintained at the same level since the last inspection.

44 Pupils have suitable opportunities to reflect and pray in assemblies as well as studying the importance of prayer and writing their own examples in religious education. During the inspection, a thoughtful prayer by a Year 6 pupil was used for worship in assembly. When circumstances occur in lessons, pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they hear or see. Year 5 pupils, for instance, responded to poems written by classmates in a literacy lesson by appreciating the feelings expressed about pets lost through death. Discussions of such sensitive issues and wider meanings of life are taken up sympathetically by teachers when they arise.

45 Pupils' moral development is appropriately promoted through assembly themes, stories in literacy and religious education lessons and discussions about dilemmas and real-life experiences. Pupils learn right from wrong through regular praise, reinforcement and reward for good conduct and positive attitudes, while handling of inappropriate behaviour is usually firm but kindly. Religious education lessons regularly include opportunities to discuss values and decisions taken within the major world faiths.

46 There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility including such duties as ringing the bell for playtimes, operating the overhead projector in assembly and caring for younger pupils at playtime. Pupils regularly support charities and are encouraged to organise their own fundraising events, so that this support has been active and involved personal effort. Citizenship is being actively promoted, and during the inspection Year 4/5 pupils visited the Council House in Birmingham and contributed to a debate. During lessons pupils are expected to work co-operatively in formal and informal pairs and groups.

47 The regular trips to places of educational interest include cultural dimensions, such as those to the theatre, cinema, historic buildings and art gallery. Planned work in the curriculum includes study of the work of famous artists - Matisse, Lowry and Mondrian were displayed or discussed during the inspection. Music is played and talked about each morning in assembly as well as in lessons. Pupils in Year 6 have recently learnt some English country dancing. The study of major world religions and the associated celebrations, which are introduced in religious education provide an introduction to different cultures. Occasional visits, such as those by South American and Irish musicians, do add to pupils' experiences, but multicultural dimensions are less well promoted in regular planned work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48 The school is very effective in the way it cares for and looks after the pupils. Pupils are safe and secure. Behaviour is generally well managed and the importance of good attendance is taken very seriously. These judgements are broadly similar to those found at the previous inspection.

49 The school has a friendly and caring atmosphere. Adults know the pupils well and treat them with respect. They listen with consideration when pupils have concerns. Supervision is good at all times. Playgrounds are safe and secure. However, dining arrangements compare unfavourably with many schools because there are few opportunities for social interaction.

50 The school has very effective procedures for child protection. The responsible person has been fully trained, all staff are regularly reminded of the school's procedures and the school has very good relationships with the outside agencies. The school's approach to health and safety is sound. The premises are regularly inspected. All the necessary safety checks take place at the appropriate time, first aid cover is good and all accidents including minor cuts and bruises are recorded in detail.

51 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and all statutory requirements are met. A large proportion of pupils have special educational needs and they are well supported. Needs are identified early and outside agencies are used effectively. The level of care and support given by teaching and non-teaching staff is good. They assist these pupils in making good progress towards their learning targets. Gains in academic and personal progress are recorded efficiently and details are reported to parents and guardians each term.

52 Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are very good. However, in spite of the school's best endeavours these are not very effective in raising the overall attendance rate. Registers, which are well kept, are very closely monitored. Parents are regularly reminded of the importance of good attendance. The subject has a high profile within the school with certificates for good attendance being awarded to both individuals and classes. Most pupils' reports contain a comment on their attendance record. Very good use is made of the learning mentor, who each day attempts to make contact with parents whose children are absent without reason, and investigates the attendance record of all pupils with an attendance rate of less than 90 per cent. The learning mentor's local knowledge, both of the pupils and the families, is used to good effect. Illness and lack of cover within the Education Welfare Service over a period of months has adversely affected the school's formal follow-up procedures for poor attendance. The school recognises improving attendance as a priority in the school improvement plan.

53 Procedures for promoting good behaviour are generally effective. The rules are well understood and are supported by clear systems of rewards and sanctions. Achieving good behaviour in lessons requires active management on the part of the teachers and most make good use of the systems. When the procedures are not applied consistently, some pupils behave inappropriately and lessons are disrupted. Pupils are regularly reminded of the need for rules in assemblies and class discussions. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and any incidents are dealt with speedily. Pupils have confidence in the staff's ability to sort out any bullying problems. Very good records are kept of all cases of inappropriate behaviour. Racism is not a problem in the school.

54 The school has satisfactory procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. Record keeping is informal, but teachers know the pupils well and the sections they write in the pupils' reports on personal matters are of good quality.

55 Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. They are now good but there are inconsistencies in their use by teachers and across subjects. Procedures are good in the core subjects - English, mathematics and science. Tests and assessments are undertaken at the end of each term in English and mathematics and at the end of each topic in science. Assessment against nationally agreed levels have been introduced in most of the non-core subjects³. Most of these assessment procedures have been recently introduced and are not yet sufficiently embedded to make a positive contribution to future curriculum planning.

56 Baseline assessment⁴ is undertaken during children's first half term in school. Results are used to predict future tests results. Results of statutory assessment tasks and tests⁵ at the end of each key stage and optional interim tests in English, mathematics and science are carefully analysed to identify any common misunderstandings or lack of knowledge so that these areas can be taught more thoroughly in future. Statutory test results are analysed against baseline and predictions to monitor progress and value added by the school. They are analysed for gender bias, too.

57 Ongoing informal assessment opportunities are built into weekly lesson planning and the results used when assessing against nationally agreed levels later in the term. There are good examples of detailed marking, especially in Years 2, 5 and 6, where pupils are shown how to improve and extend their learning. Some very good examples of dialogue between teacher and pupil were noted in Year 5, especially in English and science. Results of assessment are used to set whole class, group and in some cases individual targets. The targets are pasted into pupils' exercise books. These are developed best in English. They are shared with parents when termly interviews are held. In most junior classes the class and group targets are displayed on the wall and regularly referred to. In Year 6 targets are discussed termly with individual pupils when new targets are set or concentration on specific aspects of the previous targets are agreed. This is effective in making pupils realise what they have to do to improve. Most teachers keep good informal records on all aspects of pupils' progress and development. Classroom assistants are used well in lessons to contribute to the ongoing assessments by monitoring individual pupils during whole class lessons and noting their attitude, contribution to discussion and answers to questions. This is very good practice.

³ Non-core subjects are art and design, music, physical education, ICT, design and technology, history, geography and religious education.

⁴ A system for evaluating the level of attainment of children beginning in the reception class.

⁵ Tests and tasks set nationally to measure pupils' attainment levels.

58 A portfolio with examples of writing is being built up for each pupil. The examples, which are dated, are compared with nationally expected levels and cover different styles of writing to show progress over time. This is also evidence of good practice in the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

59 The satisfactory partnership with parents, noted in the previous inspection, has been maintained.

60 Parents have a good opinion of the school. This judgement is based on the pre-inspection parents' meeting, the parents' questionnaire (which had a low response) and conversations with parents during the inspection.

Parents particularly like:

- That their child likes school;
- The approachability of the staff;
- That the school has high expectations of their child;
- The leadership and easy accessibility of the headteacher;
- The way the school helps their child to become mature and responsible;
- The good progress their child makes;
- The good quality of teaching.

The inspection team agree with these positive views of parents although teaching is judged to be mainly satisfactory.

61 A very small number of parents expressed concerns about behaviour. The inspectors judge that behaviour overall is good and well managed; however a significant minority of pupils regularly challenge the system. Most teachers cope well, but some do not always apply the school's behaviour policy consistently resulting in occasional disrupted lessons. Some parents had criticisms of the range of activities outside lessons. The inspectors do not agree. Given the size of the school, they judge the range, which includes musical activities, sport and craft-based clubs such as needlework, to be good.

62 The quality of information given to parents is satisfactory overall. The prospectus, the governors' annual report and the termly newsletters are informative and easy to read. There are opportunities each term for parents to meet their child's teacher, although around a quarter of parents do not attend these meetings. Parents are usually informed at these meetings of any targets set for their child and this is very useful in helping them to be involved in their child's learning. Pupils' reports are generally satisfactory, but lack a consistent style. Progress is not always clearly stated, nor is it always clear just what a pupil has learnt during the year, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Good points in the reports are the section on personal development and the comments on the child's attendance. Parents are not informed of their children's future work. This has been tried in the past but was not valued by parents.

63 Parents and guardians of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed. They receive copies of individual education plans and opportunities are provided each term to review progress. Whilst most parents are supportive of the work of the school, response is limited and parents are not as fully involved in procedures as the school would wish. Although invited to review meetings, few parents take up the offer.

64 The school has an open door policy and welcomes parents into the school. Parents are invited to help in the classrooms but volunteers are few. At present a small band of dedicated volunteers, including two parents, regularly help in the school. This help is well organised and makes a useful contribution to the pupils' learning. Parents are invited to class

assemblies, concerts and festivals and attendance is good. Parents make good use of school facilities for courses, for instance on parenting, and for a pre-school mother and toddler group. Most parents have signed the home/school agreement and this has had a positive impact on homework. Parent governors are actively involved in the development of the school. There is no association for parents and no formal system for canvassing parents' views on the school.

65 A few parents think that the school does not work closely enough with parents. Given the approachability of the staff and the accessibility of the headteacher, the inspectors judge that the partnership is satisfactory bearing in mind a significant number of parents appear to show little interest in being further involved.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66 The headteacher provides the school with dedicated leadership. She has a clear view of the challenges facing the school and ensures that the school is properly equipped for future development. The school is generally well managed. The headteacher has gradually installed good routines and systems for reviewing and evaluating school performance. Standards have improved significantly in the last four years and this is largely due to the headteacher's commitment to raising pupils' performance, particularly in English, mathematics and science. The headteacher has the confidence of the governors, staff and parents. She has developed the management role of the deputy headteacher and the senior staff, who are now providing valuable contributions to school development.

67 The key issues from the previous inspection report have been tackled systematically. Good progress has been made in implementing the agreed action plan in order to strengthen the areas identified as being in need of improvement. In English, standards have risen through the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, the better use of the school library, the increased focus on developing pupils' extended writing, the better match of reading materials and by the introduction of a better range of literature. Pupils now reach average standards by Year 6 and compared to similar schools this is very good. However, there are still weaknesses in reading standards that need addressing. Assessment procedures are much improved and teachers are becoming more skilful at assessing work and setting appropriate targets for pupils. Lesson planning is much sharper than at the time of the last inspection. Teachers clearly identify learning objectives in lessons so that pupils know what is expected of them. The brightest pupils are appropriately challenged in lessons. Far more pupils are achieving higher levels of performance by the end of Key Stage 2. Music standards have risen because the school uses peripatetic staff and the expertise of the co-ordinator to deliver many of the lessons. There are far more opportunities for senior staff and co-ordinators to monitor teaching and learning throughout the school. They have a better understanding of the quality of work in the school. However, the systems are not rigorous enough. Procedures are too piecemeal, often being thrown off course by staff absence or by a lack of cover and the information derived is not evaluated sufficiently to make a structured contribution to developing the subject.

68 The school has a system for monitoring, evaluating and developing teaching but it is not rigorous enough in order to enhance the quality of teaching throughout the school. The headteacher and senior staff monitor teaching periodically and give staff appropriate feedback highlighting the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching but the process is too vague and not well structured. There is no overall programme which indicates how or when monitoring will be undertaken and what the expected outcomes are likely to be. Reviews need to evaluate if improvement has been effected since the previous visit. Monitoring and

evaluating is a time-consuming and an expensive process and the school needs to gain real benefits from the exercise, in terms of improved teaching quality.

69 The school has specific aims, which are reflected in its work. It provides a stimulating curriculum and a moral code that encourages self-discipline. The staff encourage a positive attitude to learning which helps pupils to realise their potential. Pupils are gaining in confidence and applying the skills acquired in English, mathematics and science to other areas of school life. There is a supportive ethos in the school community. Although the school does not make a detailed statement in its aims regarding equality of opportunity and curriculum entitlement, it is evident in its philosophy and procedures that the school is providing all pupils with an inclusive education.

70 Through its own systems of analysis, the school is identifying the right priorities for development. The school improvement plan focuses on the major issues that will have an impact on school improvement. Reviews are undertaken on a regular basis to evaluate progress towards agreed targets. For instance, ICT standards are lower than the national average because in the past teachers' expertise has been weaker and insufficient equipment has been available to give pupils regular access. The school is tackling these issues but it is taking time because funding and training have arrived later than in many other schools. Funding is properly matched to major school priorities and specialised national grants are used effectively to promote new initiatives. A good example is the use of 'Excellence in Cities' and 'booster' funds to improve standards. The employment of a learning mentor to raise levels of attendance and additional staff to support the Year 6 class in preparation for National Curriculum Tests are worthwhile investments which have a positive impact on improving school performance.

71 The systems for financial management are generally good. Day-to-day administration is carried out efficiently and effectively by office staff. Proper checks and balances are incorporated into budget management and regular updated information is available to governors and senior staff. The recommendations of the last audit have been implemented properly. However, the school continues to carry forward an over-large sum of the budget from preceding years which could be used to good effect now. The school governors and headteacher are cautious and, quite rightly, they are preparing the school to cope with falling roll numbers. Additional expenditure is earmarked for redecoration but the school is still waiting for capital works to be completed before redecoration can begin. The expected 'claw-back' of funds for falling rolls has not happened this year and this tends to distort the underspend figure. Nevertheless, the school would benefit from further expenditure to improve the appearance and site facilities. Some areas of the school, such as the school hall, are quite austere and bare.

72 The governors fulfil their role properly. All statutory requirements are met and they have a clear understanding of the challenges facing the school. They are very supportive of the headteacher and senior staff and they appreciate their commitment to the school. There is a well-established committee structure which examines the work of the school and decisions are ratified at full governing body meetings which help to shape the school direction. Governors are involved in school development planning. They view the headteacher as the professional and tend to take her advice on major decisions but not unquestioningly. There are no structured systems for governors to visit during the school day but a good number of governors are employees and have a clear insight into the standards the school achieves.

73 The recently appointed co-ordinator for special educational needs has good expertise and manages the provision well. She maintains the register of pupils efficiently and works closely with teachers to ensure they are kept fully informed. Outside agencies are involved as

required and there are very good relationships between these and the school. All funds designated for special educational needs are used effectively. The governing body is well informed by the headteacher, the co-ordinator for special educational needs and the responsible governor who is also the integration assistant supporting in Year 5.

74 There are sound systems in place to support newly qualified teachers but because of absence through illness these have not been implemented fully this term.

75 The school is making good use of new technologies to improve office systems and improve communication with parents. Facilities, such as Internet access and e-mail transmissions are being developed but its impact on pupils' learning is still limited at this stage. Procedures for the performance management of teachers are established and completed properly, as recommended within the guidelines. The headteacher has appropriate objectives and these have been agreed by the appointed governors.

76 The school applies the principles of best value thoroughly to the use of its resources. The headteacher shares information from the PANDA⁶ and from local authority statistics on school results with the governors. They know that pupils' achievements are better than many other local schools. Many of the local authority contracted services are purchased by the school. The investment is worthwhile because best value is gained through competitive tendering of reputable companies. Although consultations take place with governors and staff on major spending and policy decisions, parents and pupils make little contribution to the process.

77 The teaching staff are an experienced and dedicated team who work well together for the benefit of their pupils. Falling roll numbers have limited staffing options and make it difficult to recruit new teachers because often only temporary contracts can be offered. However, part-time teachers are used effectively and the release from the classroom of the deputy headteacher brings benefits to the management of the school and a continuity of cover for absent teachers. Classroom assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' progress, especially to those with special educational needs. They work closely with teachers, forming a good classroom partnership.

78 The accommodation is in a sound state of repair despite occasional acts of vandalism. The building service supervisor maintains the school well but the decoration in some parts of the school is dull and faded. Displays in classrooms reflect the topics which pupils are studying and are generally stimulating and support learning. The library provision has been relocated since the last inspection and is much improved. The Year 1 and reception classes are located across a playground in a row of wooden buildings. Despite the rooms having suitable facilities and being of a reasonable size for the number of children in the classes they are not ideal because it means that the youngest pupils are isolated from the rest of the school.

79 Learning resources are generally sound in quality and range throughout the school. Science resources are good and support pupils' learning well but there are some shortcomings in ICT software and up-to-date maps in geography, which limits learning in these subjects.

80 The school's expenditure per pupil is high but pupils make good progress through the school. Taking into account the background of the pupils and general effectiveness of the school, the school is judged to give sound value for money.

⁶ A document which provides the school with statistical information about school performance.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81 Inspectors recognise the good level of improvement that the school has made since the last inspection, but to improve standards in the school further the headteacher, staff and governors should;

- 1 Raise reading standards throughout the school by;
 - Developing pupils' range of strategies in comprehension;
 - Improving pupils' skills in decoding⁷ words;
 - Increasing their interest in non-fiction texts.

(paragraphs 2, 6, 12, 13, 67, 100, 101, 106)

- 2 Improve the provision of equipment and raise pupils' standards of work in ICT by⁸:
 - Giving teachers the expertise to plan suitable work across the curriculum which applies ICT skills;
 - Increasing pupils' use of computers;
 - Providing the necessary range of software to support all the planned work.

(paragraphs 16, 17, 19, 33, 38, 39, 70, 79, 109, 117, 123, 127, 135, 144, 149, 152, 160, 171)

- 3 Develop a more suitable range of learning experiences for children in the reception class and pupils in Year 1.

(paragraphs 1, 29, 30, 87, 93, 95, 97, 99)

- 4 Implement a rigorous system for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

(paragraphs 36, 67, 68, 69, 118, 166)

82 In addition to the above issues the following less important matters should be considered for inclusion in the school action plan:

Persevere with the very good procedures already in place, to improve attendance levels.

(paragraphs 25, 52, 103, 121)

⁷ A method of breaking down words into sounds and syllables to aid reading techniques.

⁸ Issues already identified by the school in its school improvement plan.

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	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	21	26	3	1	0
Percentage	0	4	40	49	5	2	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 two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		150
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		90

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		71

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4

National comparative data	5.6
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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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	14	12	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	16	16	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	62 (64)	62 (64)	92 (77)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	16	22	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	62 (64)	85 (73)	77 (64)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	13	13	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			13
	Girls			12
	Total	19	21	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (61)	81 (61)	96 (82)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	14	18	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	54 (48)	69 (52)	69 (70)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Data for boys and girls is omitted as too small a number took the tests.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	126
Any other minority ethnic group	9

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.98
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.7
Average class size	22.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	159

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	-
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	-
Total number of education support staff	-
Total aggregate hours worked per week	-
Number of pupils per FTE adult	-

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

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	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	00-01
	£
Total income	523,548
Total expenditure	507,364
Expenditure per pupil	3,232
Balance brought forward from previous year	32,611
Balance carried forward to next year	48,795

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	159
Number of questionnaires returned	29
Percentage of questionnaires returned	18

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	36	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	62	34	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	31	10	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	62	28	3	3	3
The teaching is good.	66	28	7	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	55	38	3	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	24	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	21	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	38	7	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	59	41	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	41	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	29	14	7	7

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

83 Court Farm Primary School is the only school in the area that does not have a nursery class. This makes it more difficult to recruit children into reception. Children begin school in September following their fourth birthday. Only a small percentage of children start in reception at the expected stage of development for their age. Most children are well below average, especially in communication and language skills and in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Many have little experience beyond the immediate locality of their homes.

84 At the time of the inspection, there were fifteen children in reception. The class is housed in a building, which is separated from the main school across the playground. This means children and adults are isolated from the rest of the school. The very capable co-ordinator for early years is the Year 2 teacher whose classroom is situated in the main school building.

85 The school has great difficulty recruiting permanent full-time teachers. A temporary appointment has created difficulties because of unreliable attendance. This has resulted in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in reception. The classroom assistant and part-time supply teachers are particularly experienced and skilled and have managed to maintain an appropriate education for the children. The staffing difficulty is expected to be resolved at the beginning of the summer term. Lengthy discussions have taken place between the headteacher, co-ordinator and other involved staff on how to make best provision for the youngest children and pupils in future. Plans are being drawn up to create an improved Early Years provision which will give a better balanced curriculum for those children in the reception class, which meets their particular needs and allows them all to make the best possible progress.

86 The curriculum for reception is planned appropriately for the six areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. However, individual lesson planning has been inconsistent and some of the teaching unsatisfactory, particularly for developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world and creative skills. Not enough structured activities are set out and too much time is spent in purposeless play or crayoning pictures. Although children's work has been incorporated into pleasing displays reflecting some of the stories read, the classroom has not been developed into a lively, stimulating environment using the available resources. Opportunities to practise singing rhymes or reading to the children related to picture story books are missed. Teaching to develop early literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory with some good examples of opportunities to practise counting and recognising letter sounds. Social training in concentration, independence, looking after equipment and tidying up are also well managed.

87 Children generally maintain sound progress in all the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage despite the difficulties with staffing. The majority are not on course to meet the expected levels in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development by the end of the reception year because they enter school with below and well below average attainment in these areas. In physical development and personal, social and emotional development children begin school at generally average levels and are expected to reach the intended levels by the beginning of year one. The school baseline assessment⁹ information, which is

⁹ A system for evaluating the level of attainment of children beginning in the reception class.

undertaken during the first half term, supports these judgements. The very capable classroom assistant carefully observes individual children during whole class lessons noting their responses and contributions. The notes build up a profile of individual children's progress. No other ongoing notes of children's attainment or progress were apparent at the inspection. There are opportunities to exchange information with parents at the beginning and end of each day.

88 The quality of teaching and learning and the provision for children in the reception class are satisfactory, but have declined and are not as good as that reported at the last inspection. Problems with staffing, falling school roll numbers and the introduction of the Early Learning Goals have made it difficult for the school to maintain the same level of provision. Recently there have been improvements in resources, especially in outdoor play equipment and there are now plans to give the Foundation Stage a higher priority in school development planning.

Personal, social and emotional development

89 Children enter reception with limited social skills. They lack confidence and need encouragement to try out new experiences. They adapt well to the expectations of reception and play together well, sharing toys and equipment. Children are keen to help tidy up at the end of a session, putting equipment away carefully. Their behaviour is generally good. They dress and undress themselves with minimum adult help. They attend to their own toilet and hygiene needs. Children understand right from wrong. They are friendly and kind to each other but a few less sociable children are shy and unwilling to talk with unfamiliar adults. Children are given sensible opportunities to gain independence and make choices from a selection of activities and maintain involvement for a reasonable length of time. Most reach the expected level by the end of reception. The teaching and learning are sound. The teacher has a good rapport with the children and manages the class well.

Communication, language and literacy

90 Most children enter reception with language skills well below those expected for their age. A number of them speak only in single words or very short phrases. Few children have books at home or experience listening to stories or singing nursery rhymes and songs. Children are given good opportunities to develop their speaking skills. They listen to stories and learn singing rhymes and action songs which they enjoy, sometimes starting to sing them spontaneously. Children are given good opportunities to collect their thoughts and express their ideas. Children learn to sing the alphabet by rote. Most children repeat the initial sound of their own name and recognise it from a box of letters. More able children know at least half the alphabet sounds and their letter shapes. The most able one or two begin to build simple three letter words and recognise a number of high frequency words in books. Children handle books with care, turning the pages in sequence. They enjoy looking at pictures but most describe only the main feature. Few could anticipate the next page of an unfamiliar book.

91 Children have good opportunities to gain pencil control; good supervision ensures that they learn to form letters correctly. Children make good progress in recognising their own name card; the more able children begin to copy this and construct their own name using plastic letters. About half of them acquire reasonable control, with about a quarter beginning to write legibly under the teacher's caption. The least able find difficulty in tracing over letters and cannot always retell what they have written. Very few attain the expected level by the end of reception, although the teaching is generally sound and children learn appropriately.

Mathematical development

92 Children are below the expected level in mathematical development when they begin reception. They have good opportunities to count by rote both forwards and backwards. Most children count out five objects accurately. Less able children are insecure beyond five, whilst the majority count well beyond ten. They begin to recognise the basic plane shapes and use them to make simple pictures. Most children distinguish between short and long, big and little, heavy and light. About half the children order three objects by these attributes using direct comparison. Children are introduced to balance scales in order to compare objects for light and heavy.

93 Teaching is sound but is not sufficiently well planned to provide the necessary development for the few able children who are capable of more advanced number and measuring activities. Too much time is devoted to drawing and colouring and not enough practical activities are provided to reinforce and extend learning. Children make sound progress although the majority are still below average at the end of the reception year.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

94 Most children have had few experiences beyond the immediate vicinity of their home. They lack knowledge of the world around them. When looking at a bunch of daffodils they could not name the stem, calling it a stick. Termly topics introduce children to the wider world. Children make visits to the local area to look at nature in the park and shop for baking ingredients.

95 There are sufficient toys and equipment for children to explore ideas through role play and construction. Planning for these activities is underdeveloped so that children cannot make the best use of them. Children make a free choice of resources without guidance or direction. This is unsatisfactory and prevents children making the progress of which they are capable. Children enjoy new experiences when they are given the opportunity, for instance when they created an indoor garden in the large water trough by planting seeds, bulbs and plants they showed care and delight. But even this activity was repeated too many times during the week and little attempt was made to teach them nursery rhymes or read story books related to the topic, instead they were asked to make pencil and crayon drawings. Children are not expected to reach average levels at the end of the reception year. Teaching is weaker in this area and there is evidence of poor lesson planning, which makes the teaching unsatisfactory.

Creative development

96 Children enjoy using paint, crayons, collage and malleable materials. A few children produce drawings of flowers and plants which are good for their age, but most drawings are very immature, with the least able drawing a person with just a hesitant egg shaped head, eyes, mouth and spikes for arms and legs, colouring in by scribble.

97 Children listen to tapes of songs, but these are not always appropriate to develop their repertoire of songs. No evidence of using or responding to music was seen or noted in the planning. There are good resources for role-play through the home corner, dressing up clothes and small world equipment but this is not used purposefully because it is not properly planned or directed. Teaching and learning are generally sound but at least half the children are capable of reaching the expected level if given the right opportunities.

Physical development

98 Large play equipment has been improved so children have opportunities to use bicycles, tricycles and scooters. They use the main school equipment for climbing and sliding; they learn to control bats and balls and similar small games equipment during planned lessons.

99 Children develop appropriate control of their bodies when changing direction when they run, hop and jump within painted tramlines. About half the children find some difficulty in co-ordinating their movements when practising balancing, and rolling forward. Children develop their skills by repeating activities but more opportunities for self-exploration are needed. Although the quality of teaching is sound children's level of learning is only moderate. Their physical development is in line with expectations for their age.

ENGLISH

100 Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are below average in reading and writing. They are average in speaking and listening. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards are average in speaking and listening and writing, although below average in reading.

101 The 2001 national tests showed that attainment was well below average in reading and writing at the end of Year 2, with very few pupils reaching the higher levels in reading and none in writing. However, test results showed that attainment by the end of Year 6 was average. When compared with similar schools, reading was below average and writing was average in Year 2, but in Year 6 standards in English were well above average.

102 A number of factors should be taken into account when considering the low standards in Year 2. Pupils enter the school with well below average literacy skills and there is a high percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs throughout the school, including three pupils who have statements of special educational needs. A high proportion of pupils are drawn from linguistically deprived backgrounds and attendance levels are low. A significant number of pupils enter and leave the school during the course of a year. Nevertheless results in Year 6 have improved rapidly since 1998 in English and the level of improvement is judged to be above the national trend. In the present Year 2 class inspection judgements show that standards are slightly higher than in the previous year group because there are a smaller number of lower attaining pupils and a higher proportion of above average attaining pupils.

103 Inspection findings confirm that there has been good improvement since the last inspection. Several strategies have been put in place, such as booster classes and additional literacy support, in addition to the National Literacy Strategy, which has been soundly implemented. Good teaching in Year 2 and Year 6 results in accelerated learning for pupils. Effective assessment procedures, the introduction of tracking sheets and target setting in English are among the more recent improvements which are contributing to the improving standards.

104 Throughout the school pupils are making satisfactory progress overall, but it is uneven, with accelerated learning where teaching is most effective, as in Years 2 and 6. The good provision and support for pupils with special educational needs provides well matched work and well focused help so that specific needs are being met. This enables such pupils to make good progress towards targets in their individual education plans. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language have a good command of English and require no specific support in the class. They make good progress, being among the higher attaining pupils in the school and benefiting particularly from booster work in small

classes. The small percentage of pupils with Caribbean backgrounds make the same progress as most other pupils in the school.

105 Speaking and listening skills are average in Year 2 and Year 6. In Year 2 pupils listen attentively, take turns to speak, and are eager to respond to questions and engage in discussions. There are good opportunities in literacy hours for pupils to share ideas and opinions about the texts used and in plenary sessions most pupils are confident to share their work, reading aloud to the class. Class assemblies provide some opportunities for drama and role-play is a regular feature in younger age group classes but is less evident within planning for older pupils in the school. The good focus on poetry throughout the school gives good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills when they read poems, such as 'The Calendar Rap' and 'The Tale of Custard the Dragon'. Most pupils speak clearly although many do not have a wide vocabulary. Higher achieving pupils respond well to the efforts that teachers make to improve their vocabulary. For example good cross-curricular links were made to literacy in a Year 4/5 listening lesson on Henry VIII. Effective questioning led to deeper thinking 'What is a monarch?' and 'I bet you can't spell 'heir!'' continually challenged and extended pupils' vocabulary. In the plenary session, pupils spoke clearly in sentences and were prepared to give an opinion about whether or not they liked Henry and their reasons why. Discussion with pupils in Year 6 elicited sensible and thoughtful responses about school life, responsibilities and out-of-school activities. Most pupils spoke confidently and clearly, some showing a good sense of humour in their responses.

106 Standards in reading are below average in Year 2 and Year 6. By the age of seven, higher attaining pupils are developing expression but many higher and average attaining pupils read word by word, and reading lacks fluency and expression. Lower attaining pupils use picture clues to help them, but often guess at words, having recognised the initial letter sound. They do not always make sense of their reading as a result. Sound teaching of the National Literacy Strategy means that in Year 2, most pupils know terms such as 'author' and 'illustrator' and 'contents' page. Higher attaining eleven-year-old pupils and some average attaining pupils read fluently, making good use of punctuation and reading with expression. The most able are articulate, discussing reading preferences, favourite authors and personal interests. One higher attainer, with English as an additional language, used terms such as 'skimming' and 'scanning' and explained how he sometimes read the newspaper. Other average readers stumble over words because strategies for building unknown words are limited, and they do not always have a good understanding of their reading. By the age of eleven pupils know how to use a contents and index page, know that the dictionary is an alphabetical order and are familiar with the term 'glossary'. Most understand the colour coded system in the library but are less familiar with locating books by numbers. Pupils take books home to read and most read to an adult at home. They have a limited interest in non-fiction books. Teachers maintain detailed records of pupils' progress, including progress of groups in guided reading. The school does not make sufficient use of home/social reading diaries as a method of communication with parents. The library has recently been improved with considerable funding for books, although book provision is only adequate. There is good provision for working in the library but private study and research skills are not sufficiently developed.

107 Standards in writing are below average in Year 2 but are close to average in Year 6. Pupils in Year 2 are beginning to write for an increasing range of purposes, for example a 'wanted' poster for the wolf, speech bubbles, news, stories and simple poems in the style of Michael Rosen. They use simple punctuation, although not consistently. Higher attaining pupils spell simple words with reasonable accuracy and make reasonable guesses at other spelling, but weaknesses remain for a significant number of pupils because they do not have a wide range of strategies such as spelling strings to call upon when attempting to spell a word. The heavy reliance on worksheets results in little extended writing. Handwriting and

presentation is untidy for a significant proportion of pupils. In Year 6 pupils write for a wide range of purposes. These include book reviews, play scripts, newspaper reports, stories, poetry and formal grammar and comprehension. The higher attaining pupils write in a lively style with imaginative ideas and good use of description, for example 'the heat penetrated the wrecked fuselage, a blistering sizzling heat.' Literacy makes an effective contribution to pupils' cultural development as pupils explore myths and legends and discuss a poem based on the Creation from another culture. The most able pupils write enthusiastic accounts of a visit to the theatre to see the pantomime. 'The music, the sound effects and colourful lights were excellent especially the thunder. The quick change of scenery,... this was the most refreshing trip I have ever been on. It was a wonderful experience!' wrote one boy. Pupils are introduced to the work of Dickens and Shakespeare as well as creating 'Hogwart's News' using part of the text of Harry Potter. There is evidence of good cross-curricular work as one boy writes an account of Eid for the class. It is well written and makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Other writing introduces letters of complaint, persuasive writing and brochures to advertise 'Sea World'. Average and lower attaining pupils continue to struggle with spellings. For example, an average pupil wrote 'told' as 'toled', but attempted more complex spellings such as 'celebration'. Spelling and punctuation are weaknesses for lower attainers and writing does not always make good sense. Pupils know how to redraft their work. They use dictionaries to help them with word meanings. Higher attaining pupils have a sound understanding of skills such as note taking.

108 Standards of handwriting and presentation skills are below average for a significant proportion of pupils. Pupils write in ink and most write in a cursive style but skills are not built upon consistently and some pupils do not reflect the same standard of handwriting produced in handwriting books as in other aspects of writing.

109 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with accelerated learning resulting from the best teaching in Years 2 and 6. In these good lessons, learning objectives are shared with pupils and they are clear about what they have to do. They cover a good amount of work in lessons because the pace is brisk. Additional support is effectively deployed. They give good support, ensuring inclusion of all pupils. In the weaker teaching expectations are too low and the pace of lessons is pedestrian. This limits the progress pupils make and behaviour sometimes deteriorates. Standards of presentation are variable which results in some untidy work from pupils. Although there is evidence of some use of word processing skills, insufficient use is made of computers and other technology to support English.

110 The good provision for pupils with special educational needs results in good progress. Clearly identified targets within individual educational plans enable teachers to plan carefully so that specific needs are being met both within class and when withdrawn by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Well-targeted use of support staff enables pupils to succeed. As a result many of these pupils achieve well, given their prior attainment.

111 The recently appointed English co-ordinator provides sound leadership and management. She has made a positive start with the introduction of target setting but further work is needed to ensure a consistent approach that is clearly understood by all teachers. There are good assessment procedures in place and outcomes of assessment are being used to set targets for pupils. The marking of pupils' work is not always consistent and is an area for further development. Marking is sometimes superficial and lacks sufficient comments to help pupils improve their work. The best marking creates a dialogue with the pupils so that they know what needs to be improved. A tracking system is in place so that pupils' progress over time can be monitored. The monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet rigorous enough.

112 Good use is made of visits, such as to the theatre or cinema. Such opportunities make a positive contribution to enriching the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

113 The National Curriculum test results for 2001 showed that Year 2 pupils reached well below average standards and Year 6 pupils above average standards. The present standards of attainment are below average at the end of the infants but average by the end of the juniors. The Year 2 class is smaller this year and there are fewer pupils with lower levels of attainment and a slightly higher proportion of more able pupils. In Year 6 standards are fairly similar to last year. The school's 'booster' programme is not yet complete and this is expected to raise the attainment of a number of pupils who are on the fringe of reaching the higher levels. Compared with similar schools pupils achieve above average standards in Year 2 and well above average standards in Year 6. It also indicates significant improvement since the last inspection.

114 In Year 1 most pupils can count mechanically in ones to ten but few understand the concept of place value when finding ten more than a single digit number. Most pupils are beginning to understand subtraction by taking away items in practical exercises. From Year 2 onwards pupils' mental arithmetic is well developed. Year 2 pupils add three numbers to 20 with confidence, and Year 3 pupils double numbers to 100. In Year 4 pupils understand and give multiplication and division calculations as inverse operations while Year 5 pupils recognise decimals to two places. By Year 6 pupils use their mental skills, written methods or calculators as required to work out numbers to fit sequences. Pupils are confident and often use all four different operations¹⁰ in mathematical tasks. Pupils' arithmetic skills are secure and by Year 2 pupils add confidently, count in twos and tens, recognise odd and even numbers and round numbers to 10. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty in understanding the concept of tallying numbers and it is only with classroom assistants' support that they can complete tasks. Year 6 pupils calculate using decimals and percentages and recognise negative number, square numbers and square roots. Pupils have appropriate knowledge of shape, space and measurement and handle data competently. Teachers also develop pupils' numeracy skills appropriately in other subjects, such as the use of measurement in length and time and tallying statistical information.

115 While higher attaining pupils are more confident about working out the mathematics required within a task, such as when tackling problems in sentence form, average and lower attainers are often weaker, and this aspect of mathematics is less well developed for all pupils. Pupils are not confident about deciding which operation is needed to work out a solution, are not secure in whether the answers they obtain are reasonable and are not always sure how the result they have calculated fits the question originally posed. In Year 6, for instance, some pupils put numbers into the calculator to answer money problems using pounds and others using pence. This resulted in large numbers which they copied unquestioningly as answers. Some of the flexibility exhibited in mental calculation is not used even by higher attainers in written calculation. For instance, pupils calculating a 10 per cent discount on cinema tickets did not think to work out 90 per cent of the standard price.

116 The effective teaching, particularly in booster groups, in Year 6 is significant in enabling pupils to attain average standards. While teaching elsewhere in the school is satisfactory in most cases, it lacks the clear focus of the best lessons. In Year 6 there is good questioning about what a pupil is thinking and whether answers given are reasonable so pupils have to justify their contributions. There is active encouragement to check results by other methods, including applying different strategies, so pupils are confident their answers

¹⁰ Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

are correct. Strategies for tackling work confidently like reading the question carefully and deciding what it means, showing working so that any errors can be spotted and looking for quicker methods are taught and reiterated so pupils' work is more accurate and can be self-checked. The importance of learning basic facts such as multiplication tables are stressed and rehearsed by brisk question and answer sessions so pupils make an effort to learn them. Homework is effectively used to provide examples for lessons and as practice for work done in class - it is regularly set and there is a clear expectation that it will be completed for the next day's lesson so pupils learn good work habits. In the booster groups, which are smaller classes containing pupils with similar prior attainment, rapid progress is made by all pupils especially as they are actively involved in discussing their work and they grow increasingly independent.

117 In most lessons teachers know what they want pupils to learn and use a range of methods to introduce new work. They intervene suitably so that pupils are able to complete the tasks, and classroom assistants appropriately ensure lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are able to make progress. Teachers are encouraging so that pupils develop confidence and are willing to persevere. However, they often lack the rigour of the Year 6 teaching. They do not regularly expect pupils to explain their reasoning and accept poor presentation. Examples are not always well graded so that pupils build on their knowledge as they tackle work. While plenary sessions are usually supportive of pupils' efforts, they often only share work done rather than extending pupils' thinking or showing how the mathematics involved is applied to everyday life. ICT is seldom used to support the teaching of mathematics.

118 The subject co-ordinator fulfils her role properly. In the past she has received significant training in the numeracy strategy but the monitoring of standards throughout the school is still in need of further development.

SCIENCE

119 By the end of Key Stage 1 attainment is below average and teacher assessment tasks for 2001 showed that standards were well below national levels. This is mainly due to pupils' limited knowledge and understanding of the world around them when they enter school and their continuing limitations in spoken and written language skills. Pupils make sound progress through the infants and good progress in the junior years so that by the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils are achieving at the expected level for their age. Achievement in National Curriculum tests is much better than for similar schools and those nationally. The curriculum is heavily focused on the acquisition of scientific knowledge and this prepares pupils well for the achievement of very good results in the national tests. The investigation elements of science and use of skills is comparatively less well developed. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards have risen significantly in Key Stage 2. Far more pupils are reaching higher standards.

120 Limited knowledge and understanding and writing skills by most pupils in Year 1 means they are unable to write about what they learn. In one lesson seen, plants were provided so that pupils could look at different root systems using magnifying lenses. Pupils were interested for a short time, but immature behaviour prevented good learning. Not all pupils knew which was root and which part leaves. Some pupils were aware that water is needed for plants to grow. More able pupils in Year 2 begin to understand what makes a fair test and apply this when setting up an experiment to see if seeds need soil and water to germinate. Although about half the pupils explain what they are doing very few are capable of writing it down on a prepared worksheet even with support from the class teacher. Less able pupils, supported well by a classroom assistant, have real difficulty understanding or explaining the simple experiment being set up. Teachers work hard to give pupils the

necessary experiences to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Lessons are based on practical activities and good opportunities are used, such as visits to a farm and local environmental areas, to enrich the curriculum. Teaching is generally sound in Key Stage 1.

121 Progress improves steadily through the junior classes as pupils' knowledge increases and their thinking, speaking, reading and writing skills improve. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by classroom assistants and make similar progress to their classmates. When comparing pupils' books it is apparent that lengthy absences by some interrupts their progress. In a Year 3 lesson pupils tested a range of rock samples for hardness and permeability. The tasks were set to match different ability levels within the class. Less able pupils compared hardness by scratching rocks with a coin and estimating how easily 'dust' was produced. More able pupils tested permeability by immersing samples in water to see if they felt heavier afterwards and whether water dripped from them. More able pupils suggested a more accurate method would be to weigh the samples before and after immersion. A few also noticed small air bubbles when immersing samples and explained that the water was pushing air out of the spaces. Recording was not well planned, especially for the more able pupils who could begin to produce a table of results independently. Good emphasis is placed on acquiring and understanding scientific terminology.

122 By Year 6 pupils have good understanding and knowledge in all topics. Teachers plan their lessons well. In Year 6 learning objectives are clearly defined by the teacher and consolidation of the previous lesson's learning is undertaken by a thorough recapitulation. They understand that to see an object light must travel from a source, be reflected from the object into the eye of an observer whose brain interprets it. Most learning continues through practical activities. However, because of the need to learn facts to achieve good test results, most learning is very teacher directed. Teachers try to compensate for this by setting investigative tasks for homework, but this is not sufficient to prepare pupils for real scientific investigation by raising their own questions, planning ways to investigate, selecting suitable equipment and making a series of observations and measurements that are adequate for the task. More able pupils' ability to analyse results and make deductions is underdeveloped. Recording skills are improving so that pupils present results using tables and different graphs, but too much of this is still teacher directed or prompted by prepared worksheets. More able pupils are capable of recording results independently. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is generally sound.

123 The science curriculum has been revised recently and provides a good basis for further development. It meets National Curriculum requirements; it is in the first year of implementation. Teachers are evaluating it for review at the end of the year. Assessment procedures are also newly introduced. These are good and will be a useful source of information on attainment and progress in the future. Resources to support all topics are good. Good use is made of the local environment and businesses to support learning. Homework tasks support lessons well, especially in Year 6. Computers are sometimes used for data handling and research, but this resource is underdeveloped at present. There are good links with other subjects, especially design and technology; for instance Year 6 pupils are applying their knowledge of electric circuits with switches to make a battery powered wheeled vehicle. Links with English by using science texts and especially in developing appropriate recording methods independently are not sufficiently developed. The co-ordinator has held the responsibility for several months only. She has a clear idea of what is needed to develop the subject further.

ART AND DESIGN

124 The satisfactory standards found at the previous inspection have been maintained. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are average with some good features. Steady improvements have taken place since the last inspection. A good, annual art and design year plan has been introduced linked to the national guidance. This provides teachers with a clear structure from which to plan. It includes a clear focus each year on the work of particular artists. The use of visits continues to enrich the curriculum. There are particular strengths in teaching in Years 2 and 4. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, although this is better where teaching is stronger. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported so that they are fully included in lessons and make the same progress as other pupils in the class. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language in Key Stage 2, speak good English, understand well and require no additional help in lessons. They make the same progress as other pupils, and in some cases they make better progress, being among the higher attainers. There is no difference in the progress of boys and girls or between those of different ethnic groups. A contributing factor to the progress being made is the thorough scheme of work, which provides good guidance and ensures systematic progression of skills.

125 Pupils in Year 2 work competently and confidently with a range of materials. They show the expected awareness of colour for their age as they produce collages in the style of Henri Matisse. Pupils' paintings and symmetrical pictures using crayon show sound control of paintbrushes and crayon in textile work when they produce a collage based on earlier observational drawings of fruits. The drawings show good attention to proportion, colour and detail. They competently join fabrics with careful sewing skills. Some good work is achieved as pupils explore textiles, colour and shape. Pupils handle rollers satisfactorily and produce repeated prints of leaf designs pressed from polystyrene. The more able pupils combine colours well and arrange their repeating pattern thoughtfully. In Years 1 and 2, pupils have experience with modelling materials such as clay and create three-dimensional models, such as Dick Whittington and his cat in Year 1 by using simple papier-mâché.

126 By Year 6 pupils have well developed skills using clay. For example, in Year 4 they create clay vases with fine detailed designs of habitats around the base. Fine detail is shown in delicate clay leaf mobiles. The pupils have increased their awareness of pattern with block painting, rubbings taken from the outside environment and boldly painted masks as part of their topic on the Egyptians in Year 4. Pastel drawings in the style of Picasso and Monet are good, as are the colour block patterns in the style of Mondrian. Three-dimensional work includes musical instruments created in Year 5 and further clay work. Pupils create collages based on the pre-Raphaelite paintings 'The Lady of Shalott' and 'Ophelia', showing a satisfactory range of skills.

127 The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most teachers have sound subject knowledge and, where this is strong in Years 2 and 4, teaching and learning are often better. In Years 3 to 6 there is a reasonable balance of artwork linked to topics and opportunities for older pupils to engage in artistic experiences and develop artistic skills for their own sake. Sketchbooks are used well in most year groups as a tool to support the development of skills. Where better teaching takes place, purposeful marking includes comments to help pupils improve their skills and techniques. There is some evidence of the use of computers to support pupils' learning, for example designing Christmas cards using 'Paint it', work on pattern and shape, and use of the Internet by older pupils to research information on the Pre-Raphaelites, but this is not consistent throughout the school.

128 Most pupils enjoy art and design. They work with enthusiasm and sustained effort because the tasks are interesting; they are well supported by adults who ensure all pupils are included and they are proud of their achievement. This was particularly evident in a Year 4 lesson where pupils were challenged well by the three-dimensional work in clay and the

pastel drawing in the style of Picasso. The clay 'habitat' designs linked closely to work in science on minibeasts. The teacher supported pupils well in developing skills through clear demonstration, instruction and helpful advice. Pupils worked with good independence selecting tools and materials as required. The lesson was well organised and prepared. Pupils showed a good level involvement and a sense of purpose.

129 The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has good subject knowledge, teaching the subject effectively. There has been no focus in recent years to check teaching and learning in art and design. A well maintained portfolio provides some guidance to teachers. The school makes good use of visits to art galleries and museums, such as Year 5's visit to study the Pre-Raphaelites. The local environment is used well for observational drawing and exploration of pattern and shape, for example. Art and design makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development. The use of visiting artists in school is more limited. Links to literacy and numeracy are evident. For example, there is a good focus on artistic vocabulary in lessons, and pattern and shape feature regularly in a variety of artwork. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress follow the national guidance. This is a recent development, which has yet to influence standards, particularly those of potentially higher-attaining pupils to ensure they are sufficiently challenged. Extra-curricular activities make a good contribution to the subject. The art club and needlework club are well supported and enjoyed by a good number of pupils. Good displays of art about school enhance the learning environment and value pupils' efforts well.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

130 Standards at the end of each key stage are average. This is better than seen in many schools. Inspection evidence is drawn from looking at pupils' designs and examples of products they have made. Only one small group of Year 6 pupils were being taught by a classroom assistant during the inspection, so it is not possible to give an accurate judgement on the quality of teaching.

131 By the end of Year 2 pupils produce simple annotated designs to make a vehicle with wheels that move. The finished vehicles show good skills in making and finishing. Cutting and joining are accurate and neat. It is refreshing to see that pupils do not rely on sticky tape for joining parts together.

132 A good range of artefacts are produced by junior pupils. In Year 3 they make picture frames with stands, decorated to their own designs using fabric and padding, collage or paint. Year 4 pupils make many models including model television and video sets with roller pictures, a 'video cassette' and 'remote control'. Joining, moving and finishing are again neat. Designing skills improve through the school so that by Year 6 pupils produce detailed designs for slippers after looking carefully at different commercially manufactured examples. They include samples of fabrics and details of decoration. The finished products are neat and wearable. Evaluation is done orally at the end of topics.

133 The co-ordinator is particularly enthusiastic and skilful. She is keen to ensure that there are good links with other subjects. For instance, Year 6 pupils include electric circuits when making battery driven vehicles. Pupils design and make artefacts to support their history topic on ancient Egyptian life. Links with music and science exist when making different musical instruments in Year 5. The co-ordinator has established links with local businesses to see how fitness for purpose is met commercially, for example in the design of supermarket trolleys. A recently introduced assessment scheme based on level descriptors will help to track individual pupils' progress through the school.

134 An after-school club combining art with design and technology provides further opportunities for pupils to develop skills. Samples of work produced are of a good standard. They indicate that all pupils are achieving at an appropriate pace as they progress through the school. Standards reported at the previous inspection have been maintained.

GEOGRAPHY

135 Pupils reach average standards in geography at the end of both key stages. Overall, they make sound progress, improving their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils in Key Stage 2 for whom English is an additional language also make sound progress because they are well supported by teachers and classroom assistants. Standards have remained similar to those reported in the last inspection but the curricular provision has improved, especially the use of field study visits to enhance pupils' understanding by providing first-hand experiences. Assessment procedures are also gradually being put into place to record pupils' progress. However, the use of ICT is still too limited and there are shortages in some resource areas such as globes, aerial photographs and large maps.

136 Year 2 pupils are developing a good knowledge of physical features through their study of the fictitious Scottish Isle of Struay. They recognise rivers, islands, bays and mountains and represent these on pictorial maps. An average attaining pupil explains simply how the river flows from the mountains and into the sea. Pupils define the occupations of some of the islanders but find it more difficult to contrast their lifestyle with people living in Erdington. They say it is quieter on the island because there are fewer cars. Pupils are developing a sound understanding of places beyond their own locality through following the world travels of Barnaby Bear and building up an awareness of maps. Most pupils of this age recognise the countries of the United Kingdom on a map.

137 The majority of pupils in Year 6 reach average standards in their geography studies. They have a clear understanding of how people can damage the environment by polluting the atmosphere. They recognise that car exhaust emissions, bonfire smoke and industrial fumes damage the quality of air and cause breathing problems for people living in cities. Higher attaining pupils explain how chemicals sprayed on the land can seep through the surface and pollute watercourses. However, most pupils are unsure about how damage is done to the ozone layer.

138 Pupils have a sound understanding of United Kingdom, European and world maps. They name major countries and continents but lower attaining pupils are vague about the location of Birmingham, and London on a map of the British Isles. Pupils have sound mapping skills. They use an A to Z map to locate features and pick out roads, railways and rivers. They are less proficient in recognising the symbols for other features such as pathways and quarries.

139 Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is sound in both key stages but one very good lesson was observed in Year 2. Generally, teachers are skilful at asking pupils questions that make them reason and think carefully about geographical issues. They use resources well to interest pupils and make tasks relevant for pupils' age and ability level. This was shown in a Year 3 lesson when the teacher asked pupils to locate information in a range of travel brochures. Teachers usually manage their classes well, using a range of approaches and varying tasks to maintain pupils' interest. However, when teachers' introductions are too long pupils become restless and lose interest and the noisy atmosphere does not lend itself well to good learning. Classroom assistants are very effectively used in lessons. They have a good rapport with pupils, especially those with special educational

needs and give good support to their learning. Most pupils behave well and are keen to be involved in the lesson by making written and oral contributions. Pupils work well together in groups, share their ideas and usually tackle tasks with enthusiasm, as shown in a Year 2 lesson when a collage map was produced to represent an island.

140 The curriculum is well balanced and enriched by class visits to places of interest within the locality. Literacy and numeracy skills are well integrated into learning activities and enhance pupils' basic skills. The curriculum caters well for all groups of pupils.

141 The deputy headteacher is successfully managing the subject on a temporary basis due to the absence of a permanent member of staff. Some monitoring of teaching and learning has been undertaken but it is not structured enough to build a strong evidence base on which to build further developments in the subject accurately.

HISTORY

142 Standards in history are average at the end of both key stages. Overall, pupils make sound progress throughout the school, building on their previous experiences, developing sound levels of knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils in Key Stage 2 for whom English is an additional language also make sound progress because they are well supported by classroom assistants in lessons.

143 It was only possible to observe two history lessons during the inspection period; however, a good range of evidence was gathered. This includes the scrutinising of pupils' work, discussion with staff and older pupils, a review of displays and an examination of policies, schemes and teachers' planning.

144 Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Assessment procedures have been established and help to inform teachers' planning. Learning objectives are now clearly displayed in lessons. The use of ICT in the subject, however, is still underdeveloped. There are very few examples of pupils using computers in lessons and the range of software resources is limited.

145 Year 2 pupils have a sound understanding of the events of the Great Fire of London. One higher attaining pupil reporting as an eyewitness writes 'it looked like the sky was on fire, houses collapsed and people ran away and got into boats'. Pupils draw reasoned comparisons between the buildings of Stuart England and those of today. They sequence a series of illustrated events in the life of Florence Nightingale as she nursed the soldiers in the hospital at Scutari. Lower attaining pupils need support with this activity in order to get events in the right chronological order.

146 In Year 6, pupils acquire sound levels of historical information about the Victorian period. They build up an understanding of Victorian pastimes and draw comparisons with lives of children today with those of the past. Pupils draw suitable conclusions from information photocopied from textbook resources, such as census material, but there is little evidence to suggest that they use research from original materials to build up their own investigative skills. A sound understanding of the passage of time is being developed by pupils, for they can place fairly accurately key events in the Victorian period on a timeline, such as the invention of different modes of transport.

147 There is limited evidence to form an overall judgement on the quality of teaching throughout the school but both lessons observed during the inspection were good. Teachers help pupils to reason by posing good questions and develop literacy skills well by setting

tasks which give pupils a feel for the period being studied. This is illustrated well in Year 5 where pupils make a written plea to join Dr Barnardo's orphanage. Teachers appear to enjoy teaching history and exude confidence in their explanations and descriptions to pupils. Classroom support staff are fully involved in lessons and give significant learning support to pupils with special educational needs. There is a good ethos for learning, especially in Year 4, where pupils are surrounded by good quality displays of ancient Egypt which are used to enliven the teaching. In the two lessons observed pupils were well managed. They appear to enjoy history and respond well to the tasks that teachers set. Their behaviour is good and they form good relationships with each other.

148 There is a sound, well-balanced curriculum in place, which is enriched by a good range of activities, particularly through visits to places of historical interest and by visitors to school with expert knowledge. All pupils have equal access to this provision. The headteacher is temporarily managing the subject due to the absence of a permanent member of staff. Reviews of pupils' work are completed periodically which give an indication of standards throughout the school but this does not result in the production of an action plan for further subject development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

149 Pupils' attainment is below average by the end of Years 2 and 6, but this is mainly due to the limited provision of suitable resources over a number of years. The school has only recently increased the number of computers, networked with the Birmingham Grid for Learning and ensured all teachers have completed basic ICT training. Meanwhile the range and number of opportunities for pupils to use ICT have been restricted by what was available. The provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection and the school is now in a position to fully develop the subject. The co-ordinator is actively promoting ICT within the school and setting a good example of how it can be planned to support learning across the curriculum. ICT is also regularly used to support pupils with special educational needs. Elsewhere, although most classes have a weekly timetabled ICT lesson during which skills are taught (usually with direct contact with the computer or other device by half the pupils at once) not many pupils use the computer between these lessons. As a result the majority of pupils have insufficient practice at consolidating what they have learnt. Moreover, some of the tasks they are given do not use ICT most effectively. Much of the word processing, for example, is used to produce good copies of pieces of writing rather than as a tool for drafting and redrafting writing at the development stage. Excluding the two timetabled ICT lessons, fewer than one in twenty lessons observed during the inspection involved any use of ICT and the scrutiny of work contained few pieces of work completed on the computer.

150 Year 6 pupils have completed some word processing to produce final outcomes, used spreadsheets to calculate averages and accessed the Internet to support work in history, but they are not using any of the skills regularly and most pupils have not used graphic or control programs for a long time. Year 5 pupils in the co-ordinator's class, who have more regular opportunities, are confident about accessing the Internet and then copy paste and print pictures which they want to use to support their work. They have satisfactory keyboard skills to enable them to type accompanying captions and enter and close files as required. They can adjust the size and position of their pictures to fit the page, using print preview, if expected to do so, but few pupils think about doing this independently. Year 2 have produced Christmas card designs and word processed instructions for making puppets. During the inspection pupils programmed the Roamer¹¹ to follow a simple track. While a few

¹¹ An electronic toy which accepts a series of commands to travel and turn and then moves across the floor according to the program.

pupils are confident about giving a complete series of instructions, most need assistance in order to complete their sequence.

151 In the two lessons observed, ICT was soundly taught. In both classes suitable activities were planned both for those directly using ICT and those doing associated work. In Year 5 the associated activity was particularly useful in making comparisons between ICT and other manual methods for displaying information. The teacher illustrated to the pupils that they did not necessarily read and absorb information fully when accessing it from the Internet. Useful interventions by adults when pupils are using ICT ensure that they make adequate progress. In Year 2, for instance, the teacher and the classroom assistant encouraged pupils to walk the track, pace the length, talk through their intentions, and note and amend written instructions before programming the Roamer. As a result, pupils improved on their first attempts and saw why the toy had not always done as they expected. This use of pupils' mistakes is often effective in enabling them to understand better. Effective questioning during all ICT sessions helps pupils to clarify ideas and apply or extend skills.

152 Although teaching staff have improved their confidence in basic ICT skills, many still lack confidence in using it as a valuable tool across the curriculum to enable pupils to acquire, consolidate and develop skills and provide sufficient activities so that computers are in regular use.

153 The ICT co-ordinator provides an after-school club which gives useful opportunities for those who choose to attend to practise their skills.

MUSIC

154 Due to timetabling arrangements, a limited number of lessons were observed. Judgements are based on the evidence of planning and other documentation as well as discussion with teachers and pupils and scrutiny of composition. Standards have improved since the previous inspection, when music was a key issue for improvement.

155 Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is now average. This is a result of in-service training which has improved some teachers' knowledge of the subject. The introduction of the national guidance as a scheme of work is providing a more structured and balanced approach to teaching music. Some improvement has been made to resources with the purchase of additional keyboards. A recent development is the provision of tuition in flute and clarinet for a small number of pupils. Although there are still shortcomings in the subject, these factors have contributed to improved standards. Most pupils make steady progress as they move through the school. Where this is not the case it is a direct result of unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy music and make the same progress as others in the class. This is also true for the small proportion of pupils with English as an additional language, all of whom have no difficulty with English, and some of these pupils are among the most able. They are progressing at the same rate as other pupils, overall.

156 Pupils in Year 6 sing in harmony with good timing. In assemblies, pupils in Years 3 to 6 sing competently and tunefully, but too often the choice of music for assemblies is too complex to enable younger pupils to join in with much success other than the occasional chorus or clapped rhythms. In composing and performing in a group with tuned and untuned percussion instruments, pupils in Year 4 demonstrate the awareness of rhythm and beat expected for their age, but these skills are not built upon sufficiently in most other years.

157 Some teachers still have limited music skills and lack confidence in teaching music. As a result, composition remains a weaker element of the music curriculum because it is not

developed systematically, but occurs in an 'ad hoc' way in some year groups. Skills in understanding and recording simple notation are insufficiently developed.

158 In Year 2, pupils explore a range of unpitched percussion instruments. They compose and perform simple pieces and understand how symbols can be used to represent sound. They enjoy singing, but missed opportunities to refine these skills mean that singing is not always as tuneful as it could be. Most pupils demonstrate satisfactory listening skills. Assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to listen to a range of music.

159 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but occasionally it is unsatisfactory. This is because expectations of what pupils know and can do are not high enough. A lack of organisation and pace results in superficial learning taking place. Insufficient attention is given to teaching skills carefully and systematically in such lessons and this results in unsatisfactory standards. Where teaching is satisfactory, as in a Year 2 lesson, pupils build steadily on their knowledge of symbols, consolidate their knowledge and understanding of percussion instruments and perform in response to these symbols. Missed opportunities to refine singing skills in this lesson did not improve pupils' ability to reach high notes and sing very tunefully. Lessons are well supported by classroom support assistants and sometimes, class teachers when lessons are taken by the music co-ordinator. They encourage all pupils to participate and behave well. Pupils acquire a satisfactory music vocabulary by Year 2, but more emphasis is needed in the junior classes to widen this further.

160 A start has been made to introduce assessment procedures linked to the objectives in the national guidance. When fully implemented, the new procedures should help teachers to be better aware of how classes and individual pupils are progressing. At present, there is little monitoring of teaching and learning in music. As a result there is no clear overview of how well music is taught or the standards achieved. A good range of additional activities, including choir, recorders and music clubs, supplements learning opportunities in lessons. Pupils participate in local musical events; singing to the elderly at Christmas, carol services and school productions. Visits to Symphony Hall enhance the music curriculum, as do visiting musicians into school. These include performers from other cultures, such as Indian dancers. A small number of pupils receive tuition in the flute and clarinet, at a charge, from a visiting music specialist. There are sufficient resources for music, including tuned and untuned percussion instruments, although there are few instruments from non-western cultures. There is insufficient use of computers and other items of new technology to support pupils' learning in music. This issue was identified in the previous inspection and has not been addressed. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory support to other teachers, but he does not have a clear overview of standards, teaching and learning throughout the school. Music makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It also makes an effective contribution to other subjects such as literacy and religious education. For example, pupils in Year 6 look at the way people express their faith and emotions through singing. One boy writing about his favourite hymn chose 'Shine Jesus Shine' saying 'It makes me feel joyful, light-hearted and cheerful'.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

161 Standards in physical education are average at the end of both key stages. Overall, pupils make sound progress throughout the school in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject. Those pupils with special educational needs and the small number for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.

162 The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The many good features reported in the previous inspection have been maintained and further modification to the range of curriculum activities have enhanced the provision. The subject co-ordinator, who was absent during the last inspection, has initiated an assessment system successfully and introduced an exciting range of adventurous outdoor pursuits for older pupils. The range and levels of participation in extra-curricular activities have also improved in recent years.

163 Year 2 pupils devise their own simple sequence of movements in gymnastics lessons in an appropriate way, although the level of control is not always of a good standard. They use the space within the hall sensibly to express themselves in creative movement. They also know how to lift and carry apparatus safely. Pupils are at the early stages of appraising each other and make simple comments, outlining how actions might be improved. They work well together in pairs following and matching their own movements to those of a partner.

164 Year 6 pupils have become competent swimmers, with the vast majority swimming 25 metres, using a front crawl style. The more capable swimmers have also acquired basic skills in personal survival. In games lessons pupils acquire sound passing skills, gradually refining their techniques through regular practice. Some of the more successful games players have a good tactical awareness and move into spaces quickly to receive passes and mark opponents tightly, whereas the less capable pupils tend to follow the ball or wait too long before making a pass, which leads to their team mates already being marked by an opponent. Pupils learn the rules of games quickly and generally participate in a good sporting spirit.

165 The quality of teaching is generally sound in both key stages but in Year 2s and 6 it is good and this enhances the quality of learning in these two year groups. Teachers manage their classes well and ensure that they keep on task and put maximum effort into the activities. The planning of lessons is thorough and well rooted in the school's scheme. As a consequence, pupils build up their skills, knowledge and understanding systematically as they move through the school. Teachers give pupils appropriate opportunities to practise but in some lessons they do not focus enough on refining pupils' quality of movement, especially at the start and finish of sequences. Most lessons move along at a good pace but just occasionally they slow down when apparatus or equipment is relocated and put into position. It is at this stage that pupils tend to lose interest and become 'fussy'. Teachers usually give clear instructions to pupils so that they know exactly what they are expected to do. Pupils collaborate well and use their imagination to match their actions to those of partners. They enjoy vigorous activity and persevere with tasks.

166 The co-ordinator is committed and knowledgeable and leads the subject well. She has developed a good range of learning activities, especially in Key Stage 2. All pupils at some stage in their education are given equal opportunities to experience these wide-ranging activities. There have been some opportunities for teaching and learning to be monitored by the co-ordinator but these arrangements are too vague. Although this has been useful in providing information on the quality of performance in individual classes it is not systematic enough to give a complete picture of standards in the subject.

167 Recently Year 6 pupils have visited an indoor rock climbing centre and ski centre and this has stimulated pupils to take a great deal of interest in adventurous activities. Pupils and staff are properly dressed for physical education lessons. However, some pupils, who are unfit for physical exercise, tend to be unoccupied observers in lessons, when they could be profitably employed as scorers, recorders or umpires.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

168 The school has successfully maintained the average attainment achieved by pupils in religious education at the end of both key stages in relation to the locally agreed syllabus. By Year 6 pupils have broad knowledge of the major world faiths and can use their knowledge to compare and understand the different ways in which believers conduct their lives. During the course of their junior education pupils learn about birth customs, annual celebrations, important stories and religious symbols. They regularly put these in the context of emotional responses and relationships so that they become increasingly aware of a range of values and beliefs which are held by different people. All pupils make sound progress in both key stages by building up their skills, knowledge and understanding of religion. Those pupils with special educational needs are well supported by classroom assistants who help to ensure that appropriate levels of progress are made. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.

169 During the inspection Year 6 pupils learnt about the religious colours associated with the seasons of the Christian year, as part of their work on understanding how faith can be expressed through the arts. They have already studied the place of music in religious contexts and can name different types of music which are connected with religion. Pupils in Year 5 consider the need for rules and the importance of fairness. They are aware of different rules, which are important to followers of the major faiths and discuss confidently reasons for the introduction of these rules, such as for safety and respect, as applied to their daily lives. In Year 2 pupils are currently learning about Judaism and the celebration of the Passover. During their lesson they increased this knowledge by hearing about, then tasting elements of the Seder meal, and considered why each of the six items is important in remembering the history of the Jews.

170 Religious education is well taught. Regular use is made of a range of resources, including visitors, to interest pupils and help them to remember what they have heard and put it in context. The Year 6 lesson, for instance, started with input from the local United Reformed Church minister who brought his stoles. In Year 2 pupils were able to taste some of the six items from a Seder meal. Teachers are skilful at finding ways to recapitulate essential information by different methods to increase pupils' recall of facts. In Year 2, for instance, after the facts were given, the teacher used a storybook to reinforce them. References to different religious faiths within any one lesson also ensure pupils become aware of similarities and differences between them. Each lesson includes provision for consideration of how religious principles being studied apply to daily life, and provide opportunities for discussion of feelings. Sensitive issues such as death, bullying and racism are tackled directly and thoughtfully so pupils feel confident about expressing any worries or concerns openly. While the subject is appropriately used to promote moral thinking, this effective use of open discussion has potential for extending pupils' moral development by skilful choice of examples and situations. The major contribution to pupils' spiritual development is also made through religious education.

171 Many religious education lessons effectively include activities, which provide practice in literacy skills, especially opportunities to write logical factual accounts. While ICT is occasionally used to support religious education by accessing the Internet, use of the computer is not regularly integrated into planned work in the subject.