

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTHFIELD ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Netherton, Dudley

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103775

Headteacher: Mrs E Roberts

Reporting inspector: Mr Peter Sandall
25771

Dates of inspection: 20th - 23rd January 2003

Inspection number: 246313

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 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Steventon
Date of previous inspection:	3 rd November 1997

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15181	Mrs M Hackney	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils The school's partnership with parents and carers
3751	Mrs T Cotton	Team inspector	English Music Special educational needs English as an additional language Equal opportunities	
25384	Mr R Bonner	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education	
27369	Mrs C Sandall	Team inspector	Science Art	How good are curricular and other opportunities
19765	Mrs P Shannon	Team inspector	Areas of learning in the Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Design and technology	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Northfield Road is bigger than most primary schools and has 225 boys and 216 girls aged four to eleven. Most pupils come from the local area, which both local and national comparisons indicate has some social disadvantage, although many parents are positive about the importance of education. Children's attainment on entry into reception is well below that found nationally and has declined recently. The school is popular and over-subscribed in the infants. Most pupils are of white UK heritage, but an increasing number have a different heritage, mainly Pakistani and Black Caribbean. Fifty-two pupils, a high percentage, speak English as an additional language, with 14 at an early stage of learning the language. Twenty-two per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, a little more than in most primary schools. Twenty-five per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is about the national average; four of these have a statement of special educational need. The school is part of an Education Action Zone, has had 'Investors in People' status for six years and received 'Achievement Awards' in both 2000 and 2001. There has been a big turnover of teaching staff in the last two years, including a new headteacher and acting deputy headteacher.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Northfield Road is a school with more strengths than weaknesses. It has dealt well with the issues identified by the last inspection, and standards have risen in many of the foundation subjects, as the school works hard to provide a balanced and stimulating curriculum. The recently appointed headteacher, supported by senior managers, provides strong and effective leadership focused on improvement. Teaching is sound overall, and often good for older pupils. Pupils make sound progress from a low starting point, but standards in the core subjects of English and mathematics by the age of 11, and in science by the age of 7, should be higher. Positive, creative learning opportunities have been introduced for the youngest children, although sometimes they need more careful planning. Pupils make good gains in personal and social development, are both friendly and very well mannered, and keen to do their best. The school gives sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards by Year 6 are well above average in art, and above average in information and control technology (ICT), history and geography.
- The headteacher's good leadership is clearly focused on the right priorities and she is well supported by staff with management responsibilities.
- Teaching during the inspection in Years 3 to 6 was usually good, with a quarter of lessons judged to be very good.
- Good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, contributing to very good relationships at all levels and promoting a happy and settled community.
- There is a good range of activities outside the usual curriculum, and very good relationships with partner schools.
- The shared commitment of all staff means the school is well placed to improve.

What could be improved

- Standards in English and mathematics by Year 6, and in science by Year 2.
- Teaching and learning for children in the foundation (reception) classes and the transition to Year 1.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The last report in 1997 identified five key issues for action: standards in some subjects, teaching, pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development, monitoring and evaluating school performance, and spiritual and social development. The school has targeted these areas effectively, and in many of them improvement has been good or very good. There has also been improvement in art, history and geography, which were already satisfactory. However, standards in the key subjects of English and mathematics, and in science at Key Stage 1, have all declined since the previous inspection, when they were in line with or above national averages, and they are now either below or well below this level. The school is aware of these issues, is committed to making the necessary improvements and has a good capacity to achieve them.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards attained by Year 6 pupils in National Curriculum tests (SATs).

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	D	C	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	C	D	D	C	
Science	B	D	C	B	

Results of national tests at age the age of 11 in 2002 were well below those found nationally in English, below in mathematics and average in science. Compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, standards were average in mathematics and above average in science, but remain well below in English. In the same year, standards at the age of 7 were well below the national level in reading and writing, and below in mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 did not do as well as their test results four years previously suggested they should, indicating some slowing of progress, although pupil movement accounts for some of the difference. Having fallen considerably in the year following the previous inspection, standards steadily improved at a similar rate to most primary schools until the dip last year. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 5 in tests is improving, indicating that higher attaining pupils are suitably challenged.

Inspectors find that current pupils in Year 6 attain standards that are well below average in English, below in mathematics and average in science. The school's targets for achievement in English and mathematics for Year 6 are low in national terms but appropriately challenging and may well be met. In Year 2, standards are well below average in English, and below average in mathematics and science. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are now lower than they were, and there are more pupils whose spoken English is at an early stage. The irregular attendance of some pupils also affects their progress. Given their low starting point progress is satisfactory. There has been good improvement in design and technology, religious education and music, and very good improvement in ICT, all of which were criticised by the previous report. Standards have also improved in art, history and geography, where they are now above or well above national expectations. These successes suggest that the school has the capacity to improve in the key areas of English, mathematics and science.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils like school and settle to work well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The great majority of pupils behave consistently well in and out of lessons, and are friendly and very polite.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The quality of personal relationships is very good, and makes a strong contribution to the quality of learning. Pupils accept responsibility well, but could be given more opportunities to show initiative.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Levels of attendance are low, although improving through the school's efforts. This affects the achievement of a minority of pupils.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

During the inspection, 99per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better, and teaching is now significantly better than in the previous inspection. Some very good teaching was seen in Year 2 and throughout Key Stage 2. While 57 of the 84 lessons seen were judged to be good or better, with 18 of these being very good or excellent, the work in pupils' books does not always support this. In some cases, the work set is undemanding or repetitive, while at other times the challenge is too great, both of which limit pupils' learning. This is particularly the case in the teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils are interested, and most work hard to build their skills, knowledge and understanding at a satisfactory rate, but in general they are given too few opportunities to use their initiative to discover for themselves. The setting of pupils into ability groups for English and mathematics from Year 2 onwards makes a positive contribution to learning for pupils of all abilities. Overall, pupils' learning is sound in the infants and good in the juniors.

Teachers manage pupils well, particularly in Years 3 to 6; this, together with the very good relationships between teachers and pupils, is a significant strength. Teachers' planning, expectations and methods are generally better in the juniors, which accounts for the better teaching seen here. While overall progress is tracked carefully and regularly, teachers are less adept at using short-term assessment to help them to decide what needs teaching next, or to involve pupils in understanding what they need to do to make progress. The quality of marking varies, and does not often help pupils to improve their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school offers a broad and interesting range of learning opportunities in and out of lessons, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Some improvement is needed for younger pupils, and in the provision for literacy. Very good links with partner schools make a strong contribution to educational continuity.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils are well supported in school and make sound progress, particularly in literacy, where extra groups focus on individual needs.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school responds well to pupils' specific needs and makes good use of available expertise.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good in all four areas. Through its teaching and the wide range of experiences it offers, the school encourages pupils to reflect on their own values and appreciate the feelings and concerns of others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Health and welfare are taken seriously, and everyone in the school gives personal support freely. There are very effective procedures to promote good behaviour, and the school tries hard to improve attendance. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are improving rapidly.

The school has sound links with parents and works hard to involve them in their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher is aware of the priorities the school needs to address and has done a lot in a short time, providing clear educational direction. She manages very well, and is building effective teams. Most staff are aware of their responsibilities and have clear roles. There is a unity of purpose and a shared determination to succeed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors are very supportive and interested in the work of the school. While their contribution is improving, they are not yet sufficiently aware of how well the school is doing, nor involved enough in influencing the direction it takes, for example through contributing to the school's development planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Good systems for monitoring pupils' progress are in place, but their use is not yet influencing performance. The evaluation and development of teaching is having positive results. Through analysis the school is targeting the key areas for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school is well staffed. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory and well used: computers are used very well. Financial decisions are closely linked to educational priorities. Very good use is made of external agencies such as the Education Action Zone and Ethnic Minority Additional Support. The principles of best value are successfully applied.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • They are happy to approach the school. • Their children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information they receive about their child's progress. • The range of activities outside lessons.

The inspection team broadly agrees with the positive views expressed by parents, although while children work hard they do not always achieve as well as they could in English and mathematics. Links with parents are generally satisfactory, and the school is working to improve them where needed, including information about the progress of individual pupils. There are many activities and opportunities for pupils outside lessons, and this provision is judged to be good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- Standards in English and mathematics by the age of eleven are not high enough.
- Standards in most other subjects have improved since the previous inspection and in several cases are above what is expected.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress through the school, but this could be accelerated for a significant proportion.
- There should be continuing emphasis on pupils' investigative and research skills.
- More use needs to be made of pupils' literacy skills and knowledge in all subjects, particularly to extend the range of writing experiences.
- Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as additional language, receive good support and make sound progress.

1 Pupils enter the Foundation classes with attainment that is generally well below that seen nationally. There are also increasing numbers of pupils in the school identified as having special educational needs, or who have English as additional language. About half of the latter are at an early stage of language acquisition and need (and receive) special help. While pupils generally make sound progress in their learning, some do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in the important subjects of English and mathematics.

2 At the time of the previous inspection in 1997 standards in English, mathematics and science (the three core subjects of the curriculum) were judged to be in line with the national average by the age of eleven. By 1998 they were below this, and since then have maintained steady improvement, although not returning to their previous levels. In the tests in 2002, mathematics held its ground and science improved, but English results fell considerably. In English and mathematics, pupils did not achieve as well as their previous results at the age of seven would have indicated, although this can partly be accounted for by pupil movement and considerable changes in staff: certainly the school has analysed what happened carefully to see where improvements may be made. The school's targets for attainment in English and mathematics for Year 6 are low in national terms, but are appropriately challenging and may well be met.

3 Inspection judgements, based on both lessons seen and pupils' previous work, are that standards in English are currently well below the national average at both seven and eleven. In mathematics they are below average at both these ages, and in science they are below average at seven but improve to in line by eleven. These standards are in marked contrast to those achieved in other subjects, and the improvement in them since the previous inspection, as the table below shows clearly:

Subject	Standard at age 11 in 1997	Standard now
Art and design	Average	Well above
Design and technology	Below average	Average
Geography	Average	Above average
History	Average	Above average
Information and communication technology	Below average	Above average
Music	Below average	Average
Physical education	Average	Average
Religious education	Below average	Average

4 Standards have improved in seven of these eight subjects, including the four that were key issues at the last inspection, because standards were not as high as they should have been. Improvement in both art and information and communication technology (ICT) has been very good. This represents a considerable achievement on the part of the school. Clearly the quality of teaching and learning in these areas has got a lot better, which is a credit to all concerned. Inspection findings suggest that while knowledge and understanding is generally good, insufficient emphasis is placed on developing English skills through those subjects which lend themselves to this, whether spoken English in debate and discussion, reading for understanding and to research information, and (perhaps most crucially) writing for a variety of purposes in a meaningful context. There is more evidence of the practical use of mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum.

5 Standards at the age of seven are also low, being well below national standards in English, and below in both mathematics and science. Test results and teacher assessment confirm this: standards in reading, writing and science were lower than in the previous year, although mathematics improved slightly. While progress is satisfactory, given children's attainment when they come into the school, this is a key area to focus on, as improvement needs to be made throughout the school if consistent progress is going to lead to the necessary raising of standards in these subjects by the age of eleven.

6 Provision for pupils with statements of special educational need is good and is helping them to make steady progress towards the targets set for learning. Other pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Support is consistent and focused in literacy lessons and so progress is steady over time. Targeted work in science and the non-core subjects is less finely tuned, and does not draw from the pool of expertise provided by funded initiatives, such as the Education Action Zone. Pupils with English as an additional language are also well provided for, and as a result make sound progress. In general pupils from ethnic minorities make steady progress with their learning. Afro-Caribbean girls speak more confidently than most in lessons, but pupils from a range of minority ethnic groups can be found working in all ability groups in English and mathematics.

7 The school is beginning to give pupils more opportunities to use their investigative and research skills, but average and higher attaining pupils in particular need to be given greater independence and encouraged to use their initiative. The school has a useful draft register of pupils with particular gifts and talents, but is not yet using it to challenge and extend them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- Most pupils have good attitudes to school and behave well.
- There are very good relationships throughout the school.
- Pupils are given good opportunities to develop responsibility.
- There is some immature behaviour by younger pupils when they are not closely supervised.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to use their initiative and become independent learners.
- Attendance and punctuality could be improved.

8 The great majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, have a good attitude towards school. Since the last inspection most pupils have responded well to the revised behaviour policy and know the school and classroom rules well. Parents speak positively about their children's enjoyment and enthusiasm for school. Children in the Foundation classes settle quickly and

they are happy and secure. Pupils of different cultures and backgrounds work and play happily together and all are familiar with well-established routines. Throughout the school most pupils are co-operative, polite and very friendly towards both adults and each other. They welcome visitors and many are keen to hold doors open and to be generally helpful.

9 In all classes the majority of pupils are interested and keen to learn. An example of this was observed when pupils in Year 5 were very excited by their Victorian Day, dressing in costume and taking part in role-play. The school is an orderly environment where pupils are caring and supportive of each other. During most lessons pupils concentrate well on their work and most continue with tasks when the teacher is busy with another group. However, in the very few lessons that are less well managed, time is sometimes wasted due to a minority of pupils with poor listening skills. This has a negative effect on their own learning and on the learning of others.

10 Overall behaviour in the school is good and especially in those lessons where teaching is good and pupils receive appropriate support. An example of very good behaviour and attitude was observed in a Year 2 art lesson when pupils were creating shapes and using pencils to blend dark and light shades. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection although there are a few boys in Year 6 whose behaviour during lessons is often challenging. Most pupils know what is expected of them and they demonstrate a good level of self-discipline whilst moving around the school. In the Foundation and infant classes, most pupils behave well in classrooms. However, there are some whose behaviour deteriorates in corridors when they are not being directly controlled by staff. In the playground and during assemblies pupils relate well to each other and generally behave well. The lunchtime meal is an orderly occasion with older pupils caring for younger ones while eating together. Most parents are satisfied that behaviour is good. Supported by the school's good provision for personal and social education, pupils know the difference between right and wrong. They take care of the school environment and are careful when handling resources and equipment. Although there are occasional incidents of bullying, pupils know that staff are readily available to help them. There have been two exclusions during the last academic year.

11 Relationships are very good amongst pupils and between staff and pupils. The positive way in which pupils from different cultures and backgrounds relate to each other is a strength of the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language are very well integrated and all are valued. The very good relationships and the caring and inclusive ethos of the school make a strong contribution to pupils' attainment and progress.

12 Pupils' personal development is good, as opportunities to take responsibility have improved. Pupils value the newly formed school council with elected members from each class, and feel they have the opportunity to make suggestions for improvements to the life of the school. They are keen to become monitors in Year 6, where they are identified by their black sweaters, confidently taking on special responsibilities in the playground and dining hall. The 'green team', wearing green sweaters, enthusiastically undertake responsibility for care of the school environment. Younger pupils help with a variety of special tasks in their own classrooms. Pupils are eager to take part in after-school activities and visits to places of educational and cultural interest, including a Year 6 residential visit. However, there are too few opportunities in lessons for older pupils in particular to take responsibility for their own learning, or to develop confident independent research skills through their own initiative.

13 Attendance is unsatisfactory, being below the national average, although the school works hard to improve it. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average.

A number of pupils take holidays during term time, including extended holidays to their family's country of origin. Although most pupils arrive punctually in the morning there are a significant number every day, particularly in the infants, who regularly arrive in classrooms after registration, making life difficult for teachers. In all classes staff ensure that there is a well-ordered start to the day, with registration and lessons starting on time. This has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes towards school and on their academic progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- The strong focus on improvement has lifted the quality of teaching considerably since the last inspection.
- Teaching is sound overall and good in the juniors.
- Everyday assessment does not always help teachers to plan the next step in learning.
- Relationships are good and pupils are well managed in lessons.
- Planning needs to be more focused for pupils transferring from the Foundation classes to Year 1.
- Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are well taught.
- The teaching of basic skills does not always build effectively on pupils' prior learning.

14 The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection in November 1997, when a third of teaching in the reception classes, and a fifth in the juniors, was judged to be unsatisfactory. Improving the quality of teaching was a key issue from the last inspection, which the school has addressed successfully. Teaching is now sound overall, with some good features. Of the lessons observed during the inspection period, one per cent was excellent, 20 per cent very good, 47 per cent good and 31 per cent satisfactory. Just one per cent of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory, with little learning taking place in one lesson due to methods that failed to engage the pupils' interest. While very good teaching was seen from Year 2 to Year 6, and good teaching in all age groups, it was most consistent in Years 3 to 6, where three quarters of lessons were judged good or better, of which over a quarter were very good or excellent.

15 Teaching is sound in the Foundation classes, a clear improvement since the last inspection, and as a result children make satisfactory progress towards their early learning goals. The focus on children selecting activities is not always sufficiently developed through adult intervention, and so some of this time is not as productive as it could be. There is a commendable emphasis on giving the children a wide range of experiences, but at times these lack structure and purpose. The newest children, many of whom start at a low level, are sometimes faced with formal tasks which are well beyond them: at the same time some older pupils need more challenging tasks to extend them. The teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and number work would all benefit from being more clearly structured, so that teachers and other adults can assess the progress children make and build on it accordingly.

16 Teaching in the infants is sound overall, although better in Year 2. The transition between the Foundation classes and Year 1 does not help pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding as well as it might. Many pupils entering Year 1 have yet to achieve the early learning goals¹ of the Foundation Stage curriculum², but are expected to work at levels that provide too great a challenge. While individual lessons are well taught, and teachers display effective teaching skills, on-going assessment is not always used to ensure that pupils are being taught at an appropriate level, and the learning of different groups of pupils

¹ The expected levels to be achieved by children by the start of Year 1.

² The six areas of learning studied by children between the age of three and five.

suffers as a result. This is an issue not just in Year 1 but also throughout the school, and is evident in pupils' books in both English and mathematics, as well as in some lessons. It is one reason why not all pupils make the progress they could in these subjects. It happens in other subjects too, as in a Year 2 science lesson where the content and level of challenge was very little different from that in Year 1.

17 The high quality of much of the teaching seen in junior classes relates to a number of different strengths. The planning of work is targeted more effectively at a suitable level in many subjects, and teachers have a better understanding of the exact learning they intend their pupils to achieve. As a result expectations tend to be higher, and more challenge is built into the lessons. While teachers manage pupils appropriately in the infants, in the juniors this is very good, and with the exception of a small minority of boys in Year 6 most pupils respond very well and are willing learners. Good use is made of learning support assistants in literacy and numeracy sets to target carefully selected groups of pupils, rather than always those most in need of help, so that all groups can make progress.

18 The scrutiny of pupils' work suggests that learning over time, while satisfactory, is not moving quickly enough, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics, and is not as good as the learning in the lessons seen. In English, written work sometimes indicates that there is not enough emphasis on either quantity or quality. Marking varies: comments are supportive but rarely help pupils to see what they need to do to improve. Pupils sometimes get most of their work wrong in mathematics, for example, but just move on to the next topic: there is little evidence of mistakes being corrected.

19 Pupils, particularly older ones, could have more involvement in their own learning, so that they know exactly what they need to do to improve. The introduction of individual targets in English and mathematics is too recent for the effect to be judged, but many pupils do not yet know what they are. There is good practice within the school, for example in literacy in a Year 3 class, where clear writing targets linked to National Curriculum levels are shared with pupils, pasted into their books and progress towards them discussed with individuals and indicated in marking. Pupils are responsible, and greater demands could be made on their initiative, as is beginning to happen in science. At times the laudable care that teachers have for their pupils restricts their development as independent learners, limits their finding out for themselves rather than being given information.

20 The school targets pupils with difficulties, particularly in literacy, providing specific support. Both additional and extended literacy support is working well. In addition the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) supports groups from Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 in both morning and afternoon extended writing sessions. Support is well planned and there is good liaison between class teachers, learning support assistants and the SENCO, ensuring all staff are involved in setting and evaluating targets. As well as supporting in class, the SENCO withdraws small groups from literacy lessons. Work is planned to follow the broad outline of the lesson but modified to meet individual pupils' needs better.

21 The school makes good provision for the teaching of pupils with English as a second language. It draws on the expertise of the teacher for minority pupils and the bilingual skills of a part-time learning support assistant to help targeted pupils. Teaching is good and is well linked to learning, particularly in literacy lessons. There is less focused support in mathematics and in other subjects such as history and religious education, where there could be a closer match of work to pupils' needs.

22 Pupils are taught alongside their peers within the classroom and are included in discussions and share their achievements. Teachers respond effectively to the diversity of need, for instance when helping a small group of Afro-Caribbean pupils to organise their

writing and sequence their ideas more confidently, or when supporting eleven pupils in the Foundation classes, who are at an early level of spoken English, to gain greater confidence and fluency. However, tighter ongoing assessment and recording of pupils' achievement in lessons, (including non-core subjects) is needed. This would help provide the next step in learning.

23 The headteacher and senior managers now regularly monitor teaching and learning, which is having a positive effect and encouraging good practice. It has high priority in the school's improvement planning and is part of every teacher's performance management targets. A new teaching and learning policy has been written and training for all staff has taken place and is planned for the future. The school rightly views the improvement of teaching and learning as key to raising standards throughout the school and has made a positive start with this process.

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

- Relationships with partner schools are very good.
- There is a good programme of extra-curricular activities, educational visits and visitors to the school.
- There is good provision for pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Expertise has improved in many subjects since the previous inspection, and with it pupils' attainment.
- The curriculum is enriched with drama and art.
- There is good provision for groups of pupils with different abilities, and for those from ethnic minority groups with English as an additional language.
- The curriculum for children in the Foundation classes and pupils in Years 1 and 2 is not sufficiently relevant to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of all pupils, so work planned does not always build effectively on previous learning.

24 The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities that meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum; however the quality of some aspects of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has some shortcomings, as planning does not always meet the learning needs of the different groups of children. In the Foundation classes the balance and timing of activities throughout the day is not always appropriate. Children do not have enough opportunities to develop the basic skills of handwriting, letter or number formation for example, and as a result these are insufficiently developed when they join Year 1. The outdoor provision for children in the Foundation Stage is unsuitable, as children do not have access to a secure area that can be used on a continuous basis to develop their creative and physical skills. At times in the infants pupils' learning is organised in accordance with the schemes of work rather than what is appropriate to their individual needs. This means that some activities provided in Year 1 are too hard for many pupils.

25 The planning for religious education follows the guidelines of the locally agreed syllabus for Dudley schools. Appropriate arrangements are made for sex education and raising pupils' awareness of the dangers of drug abuse. All aspects of the school's provision are open equally to all groups of pupils. Planning for all subjects over both the long and medium term is firmly based on nationally approved guidance and has been updated. This has helped to improve design and technology and ICT in the infants, and in the juniors there are significant improvements in art, history, geography, religious education, music, ICT and design and technology. This represents good improvement from the previous inspection.

26 The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been adopted but have not yet been effective in raising standards. The teaching and learning of basic skills in literacy is not sufficiently planned throughout the curriculum. The demands made on groups of pupils in lessons are not always suitably tailored to meet their needs. Insufficient attention is paid to basic skills and opportunities to develop pupils' independence as learners.

27 The headteacher and subject managers monitor planning but the systematic monitoring of classroom teaching has still to identify areas of the curriculum where planning does not meet pupils' needs, either because it is too easy or too demanding. The school has good systems for identifying and targeting pupils according to their individual needs in the implementation of the Additional Language Support national initiative (ALS), English as an additional language (EAL) and support available through the Education Action Zone (EAZ). All these additional sessions take place either within the literacy sets or in groups withdrawn from them.

28 Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are either supported in the classroom during lessons, or work in small groups outside the classroom. Provision for SEN pupils is better in literacy than in other subjects. It is well thought out and ensures that pupils do not lose out through missing other lessons. The school sets by ability for literacy and numeracy from Year 2 onwards, with the intent of making a better match of work to pupils' needs. Pupils withdrawn from lessons work at a similar but modified level. Very good teaching in a Year 6 group using imaginative resources, such as a video and digital camera, brought learning to life. This lesson shows that when work is planned to meet specific needs, then progress can be good.

29 The school has maintained the good provision for pupils from minority ethnic groups identified in the previous report. Over a fifth of the school population, a higher proportion than in most schools, is from a wide range of cultural heritages, with Pakistani and Afro-Caribbean pupils forming the largest of these groups. Presently, fifty-eight minority group pupils are learning English as an additional language in all year groups across the school. Provision for pupils from minority ethnic groups is good because the school responds to the pupils' specific needs. Using the information gained from the assessment of pupils' language skills in English, for example, leads to support being provided for their learning in the classroom. Tracking the progress pupils make over time also highlights gaps in attainment and helps pupils achieve steadily. The school is very clear about the difference between learning an additional language and having special educational needs and uses this knowledge when planning work for different groups.

30 The school recognises the need to provide more challenging work for higher attaining pupils in lessons and has identified both gifted and talented pupils, although this has yet to result in the provision of more independent tasks. Good use is made of numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics, and computer programs are used effectively to support pupils' mathematical learning. There is limited evidence of literacy skills being targeted through other subjects.

31 The balance between subjects is satisfactory and time for music has improved. The topic-based curriculum in the infants has been replaced by a subject-based curriculum since the previous inspection, which has improved coverage in some subjects. The curriculum is enhanced for considerable numbers of pupils through the good provision of extra-curricular clubs and activities covering a wide range of interests. These are well supported and pupils appreciate the extra work and commitment of their teachers.

32 The provision for the teaching and learning of citizenship and personal, social and health education is now more systematically planned and is becoming embedded in the work of the school. It is supported by good links with the local community and very good links with partner institutions such as the nursery school, high schools and colleges. Groups of pupils visit a wide range of places linked to their units of work, and a variety of visitors visit the school to enhance the curriculum.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- This represents good improvement since the last inspection.

33 Pupils' spiritual development is promoted through the school's climate for learning, which is evident in its assemblies and connections with local churches. Assemblies together with the multi-faith curriculum for religious education enable pupils to gain insights into values and beliefs of the principal faiths. The school provides pupils of different faiths and cultures with good opportunities to talk to their peers about their beliefs and practices. The school also provides a range of opportunities for pupils to reflect about their personal experiences and explore relationships with others. In all these activities, pupils' ideas and opinions are respected and valued. At the beginning of assemblies appropriate music is played to set the atmosphere. In response pupils are quiet and respectful. During the inspection, pupils in Year 5 visited a local evangelical church where they learned about adult baptism. They showed great respect as they listened to a church leader talk about his beliefs, and why the church he attends baptises adults. At the end of the visit pupils were provided with an opportunity to walk through the baptismal pool. In everyday lessons there are occasions when the work makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development, as seen for example in some science and music lessons during the inspection.

34 The school's provision for moral development is good. Teachers promote a clear understanding of right and wrong and pupils know how to behave. Class rules have been written with the full involvement of pupils and they follow these. School rules are currently being reviewed by individual classes under the guidance of members of the school council. From the earliest days in the reception class, children are encouraged to consider how their actions affect others. Values are fostered through the very good caring and supportive relationships that exist between staff and pupils, and the good example set by all those working in the school. Assemblies give strong support to the teaching of the principles that distinguish right from wrong, fostering such values as being a good friend and respect for one another, and there is a strong sense of care throughout the school. Older pupils are encouraged to think about the consequences of the actions of others in a worldwide context, for example the deforestation of Brazil, or the events of 11th September 2001.

35 The school makes good provision for pupils' social development. Pupils are provided with a wide range of opportunities to work, play and pursue social activities. Positive relationships are successfully promoted and pupils are encouraged to show consideration and sensitivity to the needs of others. In most lessons, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to co-operate as they work in the classrooms. Good examples were seen in mathematics during investigations, and in design and technology group activities. Care is taken to ensure that those pupils who have special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school. Each year group in Key Stage 2 elects a boy and girl to represent them on the school council. Many pupils are monitors in their classrooms and older pupils have specific responsibilities, such as preparing the hall for assemblies. Pupils in Year 6 have also been trained to teach and play games with the younger pupils at lunchtime. The school is committed to the promotion of environmental education and pupils are encouraged to be aware of ecological issues, for example by recycling, collecting litter and turning off

lights. Social development is further enhanced through the wide range of extra-curricular activities the school provides which include a variety of clubs, sporting competitions, trips to museums, and outings including residential visits.

36 The school's provision for cultural development is good. Pupils are given a variety of opportunities to develop an appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions in a number of curriculum areas. For example, the school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation and knowledge of music and musicians, both in lessons and through extra-curricular activities. These include instrumental tuition, choir and participating with others in the string orchestra. Dance and drama feature highly in the curriculum and selected pupils in Year 5 attend a 'Creative Arts Summer School'. Pupils study the work of artists, for example David Hockney, Monet and William Morris, and art that is to be found in other religions and cultures. During a religious education focus day for example, pupils in Year 2 made Mendhi patterns using their hands to print, and pupils in Years 3 and 4 created Rangoli patterns on paper plates and by using a computer program. In food technology pupils make sandwiches using breads from different countries and cultures. They learn about ancient civilisations, and develop an empathetic understanding of what it would have been like to be a child in the Victorian era as they participate in a 'Victorian Day'. Pupils' work in geography lessons effectively promotes their understanding of the wide diversity of cultures to be found in countries across the world, for example China and Brazil. Pupils' understanding of their local culture is extended through visits, for example to Clent, Ludlow and the Black Country Museum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- There is good provision for pupils' welfare, pastoral care and support.
- There are very good procedures for monitoring and improving pupils' attendance.
- Positive behaviour is rewarded and celebrated.
- There are good procedures for monitoring and tracking academic progress.
- The use of day-to-day assessment is less effective in ensuring that work is at a suitable level.

37 Since the last inspection the school has maintained its good provision for pupils' welfare and pastoral care, and parents are rightly satisfied that their children are well looked after in school. All staff know pupils well and are aware of their individual, physical and emotional needs, making an effective contribution to pupils' welfare and their personal development. The Learning Link Worker provides good and effective support for pupils identified as having specific personal problems, working with them on a one-to-one basis. The good support for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language enables them to take full advantage of all educational opportunities and activities. Good induction procedures ensure that children and their parents understand how the school is organised and this helps children to settle quickly into new routines. Pupils in Year 6, and their parents, receive good support and advice from staff prior to transfer to secondary schools.

38 The health and safety policy is well implemented through effective procedures. Safety issues are monitored and recorded and regular information provided for governors. The local education authority's building surveyor conducts a formal risk assessment each term and the staff and caretaker are vigilant in identifying any areas of concern. Pupils are well supervised during lessons and staff ensure that they are aware of their own safety and the safety of others. There are satisfactory arrangements for the supervision of pupils in the playground by teachers and lunchtime staff. Although some parents are concerned about the arrangements, pupils are given sufficient time in the dining hall and classrooms to eat their cooked and packed lunches before going outside into the playground. Regular fire

practices ensure that all concerned know how to evacuate the building in an emergency. The provision for first aid is satisfactory. Parents are contacted promptly if the need arises and accidents are well recorded. Suitable arrangements protect pupils using the Internet.

39 Child protection procedures are satisfactory and any concerns are appropriately monitored and recorded. The headteacher is the designated person with overall responsibility and all staff, including lunchtime supervisors, are aware of procedures. All pupils have access to outside agencies. Comprehensive and up-to-date personal and medical records are kept for all pupils and these are used to provide them with a good level of pastoral care and support.

40 The school has a policy for racial awareness and adults from minority ethnic groups provide good role models in school. All school groups work together well, although at playtime Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils tend to play within the same cultural group. The school is welcoming to all pupils and is a very caring community, which is responding to a wide range of need. It draws on the expertise and support of the Education Action Zone (EAZ) to help meet pupils' learning needs. For instance, 20 pupils from Year 2 receive daily support in literacy and numeracy to help them attain higher standards through EAZ funding.

41 In its firm endeavour to improve attendance the school has very good monitoring procedures that are well implemented. In classrooms registration is prompt and efficient with attendance being recorded electronically. The Learning Link Worker follows a daily morning routine of meeting parents and pupils in the playground and monitoring punctuality. Unauthorised absence is followed up on the first day and this is having a positive effect on improving attendance. The school works closely with the Education Welfare Officer who provides good support through regular visits and contact with families. Parents are reminded regularly of the need for good attendance and punctuality and its effect on their children's progress. Pupils are rewarded for good attendance, and their enthusiasm in assembly shows how keen they are to win the attendance 'teddy' for the week.

42 The procedures for monitoring and promoting acceptable behaviour are very good and are reflected in the orderly and thoughtful way in which most pupils behave. In classrooms teachers are consistent in following the procedures set out in the revised behaviour policy and generally manage pupils well. However, in the infant building some silly behaviour in corridors and toilets goes unchecked by staff. Very good procedures ensure that bullying, racism or harassment of any kind are discouraged and inappropriate behaviour is recorded and dealt with. The school has a positive system to reward and celebrate good work and behaviour and this makes a useful contribution to raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Lunchtime supervisors reward good behaviour with raffle tickets and pupils are keen to win a prize. The school has sound procedures to monitor and support pupils' educational and personal development, both formally and informally.

43 Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are good and have improved since the last inspection. When the youngest children enter the Foundation classes checks are made of what they know, understand and can do and this strategy continues in each year group until the age of eleven. Optional testing takes place in Years 3, 4 and 5. In English, mathematics and science teachers test and record, at least termly, gains made in skills, knowledge and understanding. Since the last inspection comprehensive records have been introduced of progress made in all other subjects.

44 At its best, this information is then used to improve the quality of teaching and learning by identifying and then responding to the needs of groups of pupils. The school has secure information, which enables teachers to identify standards and progress according to gender or background. The information is used to identify those pupils for whom English is

not their mother tongue, and for those who need to develop additional skills in English and mathematics. Good procedures are in place to respond to the need of the almost one in four pupils identified as having special educational needs. Manageable individual education plans are drawn up to respond to their needs and regular reviews are arranged to check progress made and then plan for the next stage of learning.

45 In English and mathematics the assessment information is used to group pupils by ability across a year group, involving extra teachers to lower numbers and improve learning opportunities. Teachers know the achievement levels of pupils when they enter their classes and have predictions of what they are expected to achieve by the time pupils leave the class. These predictions are now reviewed on a termly basis after testing at the end of each unit of work. The assessment manager has analysed national tests in English and mathematics in order to identify what skills are needed in order to improve standards.

46 The use of assessment in lessons is less effective. There is limited evidence that this detailed information is being used on a day-to-day basis to plan for progress for individuals and focused groups, with clear strategies of how to move pupils on at a faster rate in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. At present, marking usually celebrates achievement and misses the opportunity to inform pupils when they have achieved their targets and explain to them how they can improve. Pupils have targets in English and mathematics and the intention is for pupils to share their learning objectives with their parents. At present there is little evidence that pupils know what these targets are, or what they need to focus on to improve, although there is some good practice by individual teachers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- The school is committed to developing a good partnership with parents.
- Most parents feel welcome in school.
- The school offers a range of courses for parents, which encourages their involvement and raises the status of education.
- The quality of reports and the way parents are consulted about their children's progress could both be improved.

47 Overall the school has a good partnership with parents and the majority feel that the school works closely with them. Parents are generally very satisfied with the work of the school and their children's progress. Most parents feel welcome, confident that their questions and concerns will be dealt with effectively. Teachers are readily available to talk to parents at both ends of the school day and parents find them approachable and helpful. Parents of children in the Foundation classes are made to feel very welcome and many were seen in the classrooms looking at books and discussing children's work with teachers. The Learning Link Worker has a high profile in the playground, particularly at the start of the day, and has built up a good relationship with parents and works closely with them. Many parents assist the work of the school, helping their children at home by listening to reading and discussing homework topics.

48 All pupils in the juniors have recently been provided with homework diaries and younger pupils take reading record cards home with their reading books. Some parents use these as a communication between home and school. A few parents help regularly in classrooms and in the library. Two grandparents help by playing the piano for assemblies and working with the choir and as a reading buddy to pupils in Year 1. Many more parents help when pupils go out on visits and support special events. A good example of parental support occurred when Year 5 dressed up as Victorian school children for their special topic day, with every pupil coming in costume. The Friends of the School Association (FOSA) is a

small group of parents who help the school by organising fund-raising and social activities, which are well supported, by parents and the local community.

49 A significant number of parents are currently attending courses held in the school and these are successful in encouraging parents to be involved in supporting children's learning. Seven parents are studying for an NVQ in childcare and many others attend CLAIT computer courses, Start family literacy and Spanish. A sewing course, mainly attended by the Pashto Asian group, is well supported by the bi-lingual assistant, helping to develop English language and communication skills as well as confidence.

50 The quality of information for parents is satisfactory. Most parents are happy with the amount of information they receive about their children's progress, although there are a significant number who disagree. Some parents are concerned that there are inconsistencies in the distribution of information between classes. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about individual education plans and are invited to attend all assessment meetings. The headteacher sends out attractive monthly newsletters to parents containing an interesting range of helpful information about organisation, activities and diary dates. The Learning Link worker's termly EAZ newsletter to parents is very friendly and informative, reminding parents about the range of courses on offer to them as well as the need for pupils' good attendance and punctuality. Parents receive a curriculum newsletter at the beginning of each term, which provides helpful information about the topics to be taught and a homework timetable. The school has identified the need to review its homework policy and to provide more guidance for parents. Although there are no formal arrangements for translating communications, the bilingual teacher and pupils provide appropriate help where necessary.

51 Formal parents open sessions are held each term and these are usually well attended. Some parents express concerns about the lack of privacy when discussing their child's progress. The home-school contract, which most parents have signed, is reviewed with them in the autumn term. Good arrangements are made with the help of the bilingual assistant for Asian mothers to see their children's work during an afternoon session. Although no curriculum evenings have been organised recently, induction sessions for new parents provide them with insight into the early learning goals for young children.

52 Reports to parents are satisfactory and cover all subjects of the National Curriculum and the Foundation Stage. They contain detailed information about what has been taught and how pupils respond, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Although adequate information is provided about pupils' overall progress this is limited for specific subjects. Targets are insufficiently clear to inform parents and pupils what they have to do to improve. Parents have the opportunity to respond and say what they would like to discuss at open evening, but there is no provision for pupils to comment. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents provide a good amount of helpful information about organisation and the curriculum. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to share their work and progress, and are aware of targets and reviews.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership.
- She is well supported by staff who work hard for school improvement.
- Management roles are being developed well.
- Governors are supportive but not yet sufficiently involved in decision-making.
- Training for all staff is improving confidence and knowledge.
- There has been good improvement in key resources such as computers.
- Finance is very well managed.

53 The headteacher has shown good leadership during the relatively short time since her appointment. She is clearly focused on educational priorities and the need to raise standards in English and mathematics, and is implementing procedures to support this. Examples of this are the focus on teaching and learning as being at the heart of improvement, and the work on the analysis and tracking of pupils' performance. At the same time, she recognises the importance of the pastoral aspects of the school community, in which she is well supported by all who work in the school. As a result the school has a strong and positive ethos, reflected by the pleasant relationships, good behaviour and the good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. She has the confidence of staff, governors and parents.

54 The day-to-day management of the school is smooth and efficient, well illustrated by the preparation for the inspection. Senior managers work hard and feel fully involved. They meet at different times and for various purposes and ensure that all staff are involved in decision-making and have a voice. Their role has been extended to include responsibility for performance management, which gives them a better insight into teaching and learning. As a result, arrangements for performance management are working well. The concerted effort that has gone into meeting the key issues from the last inspection so successfully indicates that there is strong sense of purpose and teamwork. Subject managers are well briefed and most have a good oversight of their particular area, with clear priorities and plans to achieve their aims. Their role has been developed to give them more responsibility and accountability. However, leaders in the key areas of English and mathematics are new to the role and have yet to make an impact. The deputy headteacher has had to cope with a variety of roles over the last year. She has done so very successfully and offers good support to the headteacher, as do other members of staff. Much hard work, for example, has gone into the systems for tracking pupils' progress.

55 There is a good relationship between the school and the governing body, who are clearly proud of their school and identify with it strongly. All statutory requirements are met. Governors spoken to are starting to feel more involved and have a better level of understanding of the school's strengths and needs, although they have yet to grasp fully issues relating to standards. While aware of the school's development planning, they are not yet sufficiently involved in either its construction or monitoring its effectiveness.

56 Leadership of special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator for SEN has the expertise and skills to manage a raft of support and link it well into the curriculum for literacy, extended writing and to some extent numeracy. Pupils' individual plans are reviewed and targets shared with them. However, objectives for learning could be sharper and planning for word and sentence level work, and basic skills in numeracy, more reflective of individual targets.

57 There is a good match of teaching and non-teaching staff to the needs of the pupils. More non-teaching support, especially at the beginning and end of lessons, is increasing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. There is also a strong emphasis on appropriate training for all staff, which is having an impact on knowledge and confidence in different subjects. Newly qualified teachers receive plenty of support. They are provided with good guidelines, and as well as their official mentor they are able to work closely with the other teacher or teachers in the same year group.

58 The provision of a school library in Key Stage 2 has provided additional areas for teaching and learning. There have been many initiatives to make the outside environment more stimulating. The gardens, ponds and quiet shaded areas with benches have helped to make up for the lack of grassed areas, the need for mobile classrooms and necessary

movement between the Victoria and George buildings. Given the difficulties of a large and sprawling site, the caretaker and her team work hard to ensure the school is bright and attractive. Another improvement since the last inspection is the provision of very good resources for ICT, with a computer room in each building, which are used by pupils from both key stages. They use these suites of computers to acquire skills, which are then used to promote learning in other areas of the curriculum. There are very good resources for art, with a separate art room and kiln. Library provision is now good in both buildings. Subject managers are responsible for auditing their resources and developing them according to the needs of the pupils.

59 The headteacher and the governing body monitor expenditure and review the effectiveness of spending decisions against the benefits for all pupils in their shared commitment to raise standards. Grants have been used to improve learning, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. The increase in non-teaching support has added to the quality of teaching and learning. Resources are used effectively to continue and extend the challenge for gifted and talented pupils in music. Funding has transformed resources and had a direct effect on standards in ICT through the development of two ICT suites.

60 Systems for the day-to-day administration of the school's financial affairs are very effective. Supported by the local education authority's finance officer, the secretary has access to an ever-increasing range of technology to support her work. Day-to-day collections are handled efficiently and there are separate accounts for school visits, and contributions towards swimming costs. Governors are well informed and the finance committee, which meets at least termly, maintains a very good overview of the school's financial situation. Private funds are audited annually and limits are imposed upon expenditure. There are detailed procedures for ordering and receiving goods. Prior to setting the budget for the next financial year, subject managers are involved in evaluating their spending for the previous year before producing costed plans for future development. Bearing in mind the many areas in which the school has improved, but also the low standards in the key subjects of English and mathematics, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61 The school provides an effective education for its pupils in many aspects of school life. To make it better in key areas, the headteacher, staff and governors should seek to:

Raise standards in English throughout the school by:

- Planning a wide range of strategies and opportunities to improve and develop pupils' speaking skills, in both English lessons and other subjects;
- Providing the time and opportunity for less capable and average attaining pupils to practise reading regularly to develop fluency and understanding;
- Monitoring the progression in pupils' reading, to ensure a suitable level of challenge;
- Ensuring that basic skills such as spelling, punctuation and handwriting are taught consistently throughout the school;
- Increasing the opportunities in all subjects for pupils to write at greater length.

(Paragraphs 1-5, 16, 18, 26, 96, 98, 103-105, 107, 108, 110, 126, 149, 177)

Raise standards in mathematics throughout the school by:

- Planning work for individuals and groups of pupils which effectively builds on previous learning;
- Tailoring the work to meet the needs of all pupils;
- Improving the quality of teachers' questioning, at both the beginning and end of lessons, to ensure effective assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do.

(Paragraphs 1-3, 5, 16, 18, 21, 113, 117-120)

Raise standards in science at Key Stage 1 by:

- Improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of the different levels within units of work and the most effective methods to teach these;
- Using assessment to plan work that matches the needs of all pupils and ensures that skills and knowledge are built on year by year.

(Paragraphs 2, 3, 5, 16, 123, 124, 127)

Also, in all three subjects:

- Use the existing regular assessment to provide specific targets which help pupils understand what they need to do to raise their attainment;
- Challenge pupils to use their initiative and think for themselves;
- Raise the standard of marking so that it informs pupils how well they are achieving and where they need to improve.

(Paragraphs 7, 19, 22, 26, 28, 30, 46, 52, 102, 110, 117, 126, 142)

Improve the provision for children in the Foundation Stage by:

- Ensuring the planned activities are more closely matched to the learning needs of different groups of children;
- Providing structured opportunities for pupils to develop basic writing and mathematical skills, including letter and number formation;
- A clearer focus on what pupils are meant to gain from different planned activities;
- Improving the outdoor provision for children so that it can be used on a continuous basis to develop creative and physical skills.

(Paragraphs 15, 24, 63, 64, 67, 69, 70, 73, 76, 78-80, 82, 89, 92)

And in Year 1 by:

- Ensuring continuity in assessment, so that pupils are building on their achievement at an appropriate level.

(Paragraphs 16, 24, 71, 123)

62 In their action plan governors should also give consideration to the following minor issue:

- Continuing to target attendance to raise it to at least the national level.

(Paragraphs 13, 41)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	84
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	1	17	39	26	1	0	0
Percentage	1	20	47	31	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	441
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	95

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	105

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	58

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	29	31	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	22	26
	Girls	22	22	27
	Total	43	44	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72 (80)	73 (78)	88 (87)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	27	24
	Girls	22	29	24
	Total	42	56	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70 (82)	93 (88)	80 (85)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	33	26	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	24	28
	Girls	16	16	21
	Total	34	40	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (75)	68 (65)	83 (84)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	24	28
	Girls	17	16	21
	Total	34	40	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (69)	66 (57)	83 (73)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	314	1	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	13	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	37	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	14	1	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	15	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	356

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6
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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	997153
Total expenditure	968807
Expenditure per pupil	2182
Balance brought forward from previous year	4342
Balance carried forward to next year	32688

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	441
Number of questionnaires returned	159

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	46	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	58	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	56	9	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	52	16	1	6
The teaching is good.	33	62	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	46	23	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	36	8	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	45	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	28	52	17	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	31	49	12	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	56	5	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	45	18	3	6

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

- Good admission procedures, including very close links with pre-school settings.
- Good relationships between the staff and children, helping children to feel secure.
- Good provision for pupils with special needs and for children who have English as an additional language, who as a result make satisfactory progress with their learning.
- Children's independence is encouraged through opportunities to plan their own learning, although this needs more careful structure.
- Children's knowledge and understanding is well promoted through a range of first hand experiences.
- Planning does not always meet the learning needs of the different groups of children.
- The balance and timing of activities throughout the day is not always appropriate.
- Children do not have enough opportunities to develop and practise their handwriting, letter or number formation. As a result good practice is not sufficiently developed when they join Year 1.
- The outdoor provision is unsatisfactory. Children do not have access to a secure area that can be used on a continuous basis to develop their creative and physical skills.

63 An enthusiastic team manager, who has drawn up an appropriate action plan to develop 'active learning through play', leads the Foundation Stage. He has begun the process of developing the Foundation Stage with a new team. Most of the staff joined either last September or in January. Resources are generally adequate, except for outdoor provision, where there are limited opportunities for climbing and balancing.

64 There have been a number of improvements in the four terms since the Foundation Stage manager joined the school. Overall in this short time satisfactory progress has been made with the key issue identified in the previous report. A Foundation Stage curriculum has been developed, with planning matched to the areas of learning. Teaching has improved and is now satisfactory, with all teaching seen during the inspection being either sound or good. The Foundation Stage manager and staff have worked hard to re-organise the learning environment to one where children can learn through a range of practical first hand play experiences. However, some improvements are needed in the organisation and delivery of the curriculum, particularly for younger or less able children, as activities do not always match children's learning needs.

65 The two admission times (autumn and spring) are based on children's age. The majority of children attend Netherton Park Family Centre before starting at Northfield Road. Great care is taken with the admission arrangements, which are good and ensure children in reception settle easily. Nursery staff visit children prior to their joining the school. Effective use is made of staff who run the Rainbow club, which helps children learn the routines in the term before they start. Records are shared and discussed by nursery staff and teachers in the school.

66 The school works hard to create an inclusive atmosphere so that all children feel valued. For example, there are a high number of children who are very early users of English. They enjoy their targeted specialist support and respond well to opportunities to use their first language in some of their activities. Children with special needs are identified early and the Foundation Stage leader and special needs co-ordinator put effective plans in place with appropriate support.

67 There are three learning areas and children rotate for different activities. They have daily access to creative activities, water and sand. Resources are mainly satisfactory. New resources have been purchased, including reading and picture books. Reception children have good opportunities to use computers. However the outdoor provision is unsatisfactory. Children do not have access to a secure area that can be used on a continuous basis to develop their creative and physical skills.

68 Parents are made to feel welcome. Staff spend time at the beginning and end of the day talking with parents for a few minutes to help their children settle in. Some parents make a valuable contribution to the children's learning at home by undertaking reading activities. There are currently no parent volunteers, although a number of parents are undertaking training within school.

69 The local education authority's baseline assessments show that that the majority of children start in their Foundation class with skills that are very low, particularly in their language and mathematics. The staff are building up children's individual records through daily targeted observations. They do not yet have detailed records based on all the elements of each area of learning, to help them with their planning.

70 Teaching overall is satisfactory and as a result children make satisfactory progress towards their early learning goals. However there are some weaknesses. At times, aspects of the curriculum are too formal for the newer children and not pitched closely enough to their individual needs. Sometimes the pace slows down because the children have too much time without adult intervention when they plan their own learning. These sessions need more focus so that no time is wasted and best use is made of the learning support assistants. Some more able pupils need more focused activities to challenge them further. While most children make satisfactory progress overall, not all children make as much progress as they could.

71 Records based on the areas of learning are passed to the Year 1 teachers. Closer liaison needs to take place to ensure that children have work that helps them to reach their early learning goals. The school has identified this as an area for improvement.

Personal, social and emotional development

72 Many children starting in reception are well below expectations in these areas of development. Staff help them to settle in quickly, and because of the effective induction procedures, which include the Rainbow club and strong links with the feeder nursery, the newer children are confidently established in just over a week. Older children gain independence, and well-established routines such as registration, group, fruit and juice time help build the confidence of quieter children.

73 The daily planning session is effective in promoting children's independence. Children enjoy self-registering and having responsibility for choosing a range of activities. Some need more focus and encouragement to stay with one activity. They are expected to take responsibility for putting away any equipment they use and to discuss what they have been doing. While the staff encourage the children to behave appropriately, on occasions children lack direction and need more adult intervention so their chosen activities lead to better progress.

74 Children work well in small groups and alongside each other. Younger children find it difficult in the larger groups and respond better to small group work. Care is taken to include all children in lessons and to make sure none are isolated. There are good relationships

between the staff and children. The staff use lots of praise, which the children respond to well. Most children enjoy learning and work hard.

75 Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. By the end of the year, while most children will remain below expectations, a significant minority of children will be close to achieving their early learning goals.

Communication, language and literacy

76 Most children start with skills in speaking, writing and reading which are very low for their age. Their listening skills are better developed. Aspects of the literacy hour are taught in a way that is appropriate for some older children, who are developing their knowledge of sounds. However this is too formal for less able children who find it difficult to be part of a big group. During choice times adults interact with pupils in the role-play area and target reluctant language users who find it difficult to express their ideas. Many enjoy sharing their ideas in this more informal setting.

77 Children who use English as a second language make satisfactory progress because their particular individual language needs are identified and information is shared. For example, more confident language users are encouraged to extend their vocabulary, while quieter children have their language and confidence developed informally. Extra specialist help is provided on most days. Children have a very warm relationship with the bilingual support worker, who also liaises with many of their parents.

78 Some children choose the reading areas when they have choice times, but not for sustained periods. Many need more active encouragement to sit and share a book. Staff teach children to handle books appropriately. Some older pupils have made good progress with their sight vocabulary in their first term and are beginning to develop sounds and words to help them read. Good use is made of computer programs to match sounds and words.

79 Staff provide a range of writing materials and older children enjoy using clipboards, pens and paper to put marks on paper, especially in the imaginative role-play areas. Handwriting is taught once a week but this is not enough, as many children have difficulty forming their letters and are developing bad habits. They need more individual support to develop accurate skills in writing. Some older children can make simple sentences with the words and sounds they have learnt.

80 Teaching is satisfactory and most children make satisfactory progress. Some older children have made good progress with their reading and listening skills in the first term, but the majority will remain well below expectation, because they start with less developed speaking, reading and writing skills. Many are reluctant speakers and need more focused activities and constant encouragement to talk and share their ideas.

Mathematical development

81 On joining the school most children start with skills that are extremely low in mathematical knowledge and understanding. They are satisfactorily taught an appropriate range of matching and counting activities. Many find it difficult to use mathematical language. Staff use a variety of ways to practise and extend number awareness and the use of mathematical language. Less confident children have their learning further reinforced through a range of number games, jigsaws, and water and sand exploration. For example in a well-taught lesson, children practise their counting skills through playing with a range of attractive equipment and games. More able children have opportunities to count and use the number line up to ten. They particularly like using big dice to count. Younger children enjoy

playing with simple number matching puzzles and big bricks. Good support is provided for children who use English as an additional language.

82 Staff provide an appropriate balance between working with numbers and activities that promote the children's understanding of mathematical ideas and language. A large number of children do not recognise more than a few numbers and have difficulty recording their work. They need more practice in writing numbers to form them properly. Good use is made of computer programs to reinforce number skills.

83 Teaching is satisfactory and most children make sound progress. Some older children have made good progress with number recognition in their first term. However, by the end of the Foundation year the majority will not reach expected standards.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

84 On entry to reception most children start with very limited skills and need lots of encouragement to explore and investigate. They are well taught through a range of topics, some of which include visits outside school. These help children to build up a picture of the world. An ongoing investigation area with a range of equipment provides daily opportunities to explore informally. Support staff interact with children, encouraging them to use large and small construction equipment.

85 In a well-taught lesson children enjoy the experience of melting chocolate and making cakes. A very able child remembers that ice cream has 'melted' and is a 'liquid'. The younger children particularly enjoy the experience of mixing, touching and tasting. Adults effectively balance intervention and letting children explore and discover for themselves. Healthy eating is well promoted: for example, children enjoy making fruit salads.

86 When children who are early users of English as a second language have opportunities to use their home language they make good progress, for example matching pictures and talking about family members. The staff successfully build on the children's own knowledge of different cultures through a range of books and toys. Children also learn about a number of festivals as they arise.

87 Information technology skills are developed well. Computers are in use daily with a range of programmes to reinforce language, number and art activities. Children also practise their skills weekly in a computer suite. As a result children have positive attitudes to computers, most using the mouse confidently with some assistance. Girls and boys display equally good skills and interest.

88 Although teaching is good most children will not reach the expected levels in their knowledge and understanding by the time they leave the Foundation class, because they start with very limited knowledge and have difficulty expressing their ideas.

Physical development

89 Overall children enter reception with physical skills below those expected for their age. They have a weekly session in the hall, but the outdoor provision is unsatisfactory. Children do not have access to a secure area outside that can be used on a continuous basis to develop their creative and physical skills. Children currently use the school playground, which has limited large fixed equipment and floor markings. The staff work hard to overcome this by taking out a range of wheeled vehicles and various equipment to help children extend their physical skills and play imaginatively. In a well-taught session, the teacher skilfully interacted with girls and boys using a range of equipment. However the area

is unsuitable and too large, and because of this two adults have to be deployed every time it is used.

90 The staff also provide many opportunities for children to practise their skills in cutting, sticking and painting, helping them to use tools such as scissors and brushes with care and developing control.

91 Although teaching is satisfactory, most children will remain below expectations in their physical development. This is because many have difficulty manipulating small equipment and do not have full access to large climbing equipment on a daily basis. The school has identified the need to improve the physical environment of the outdoor area.

Creative development

92 Most children start with limited ability to express themselves creatively. They are taught to develop their skills, exploring colours and becoming familiar with traditional rhymes. Children enjoy opportunities to recite rhymes in class and many join in singing in assembly. There are opportunities to experiment freely when mixing paints, printing or using materials and children are learning to handle equipment such as paintbrushes and scissors safely. Displays indicate that some activities are teacher directed, limiting children's imagination.

93 Role-play areas such as the 'café' and 'home' give children opportunities to express themselves imaginatively. Staff interact with children to extend their use of language and develop their creativity. Children respond well and thoroughly enjoy these opportunities to 'dress up'.

94 Although teaching is satisfactory, most children are unlikely to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the year. This is because many children have difficulty expressing their creative ideas, thoughts and feelings.

ENGLISH

- Standards in reading and writing and speaking are well below average at the end of both key stages.
- Standards in listening are better but still below average.
- Standards are lower than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Pupils show good attitudes to their work.
- ICT is used effectively to support English skills, but the development of writing skills is not planned through other subjects.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, but it should be better for some.
- 'Setting' pupils by ability is having a positive effect on learning.
- Basic skills such as spelling and handwriting are not taught consistently.
- Teaching is sound overall, and good for juniors.

95 Over time, standards in reading in the national tests in English for seven-year-olds have remained well below average, but writing has been more variable, with attainment ranging from average to well below average. Eleven-year-olds in school have achieved below or well below the national average over time. Last year, in the 2002 tests in English, pupils achieved well below the levels reached by seven and eleven-year-olds nationally.

96 Current inspection findings show that by the end of both key stages standards in speaking, reading and writing are well below average, but that listening skills are average. These findings differ from those of the previous report, when attainment was judged broadly

average, similar to the school's results in the national tests at that time. Information and communication technology skills (ICT) have improved since the previous inspection, and are used more consistently in literacy lessons, particularly for writing and researching information. Drama has maintained its importance in the curriculum, and the school libraries are now well used as learning resources. Presently there are few links between English and other subjects, whereby pupils can develop their literacy skills.

97 Despite standards which are well below those found nationally, pupils' progress, although variable, is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, pupils made better progress in lessons than in their work in literacy over time. The good progress observed in a number of lessons is linked to good quality teaching and challenging work. An example is when more capable pupils in Year 3, exploring poetry, are encouraged to explain the meaning of unfamiliar words and sayings, such as 'old-fangled' and 'bate a stiver', and use similar, rich vocabulary in their own work. In lessons in the infant classes pupils make satisfactory progress, as they learn how to write sentences, connect ideas and extend their vocabulary. In the junior classes, pupils make sound progress when structuring narrative to make their writing more interesting for the reader.

98 In contrast, a scrutiny of pupils' previous written work indicates that, although progress is satisfactory overall, pupils are not progressing as well as they should in some aspects of English. Handwriting and spelling skills are not taught in a consistent way, and because skills are not built upon progressively, standards are not high enough. Limited expectations of the quality and amount of writing, particularly in some junior classes, along with fewer opportunities to draft, read through and improve work, hold back attainment and progress in writing.

99 The school has focused on raising standards in English through 'setting' by ability in literacy lessons, and providing pupils with the right level of challenge in their learning. This provision is working well for pupils who have difficulty with their literacy skills. This is because the school draws from different sources of expertise, and provides regular, specific support. For instance, a well-planned lesson by a teacher funded through the Education Action Zone (EAZ) enabled less capable Year 2 pupils to make good progress with their knowledge and use of letters and their sounds. Similarly Year 6 pupils with behavioural and learning difficulties studied persuasive language in advertisements, and achieved well as they produced their own video and slogans.

100 In a similar way provision for pupils with special educational needs is also well thought out and linked to improving levels of achievement overall. The number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) has risen to a quarter of the school population. The vast majority benefit in some way from extra support, either from adults in school or from the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). There are examples when the SENCO has modified work in a literacy lesson to meet individual needs. This in turn enables pupils to make steady and often good progress with their work, for example when developing listening skills or learning to order and sequence events.

101 The number of pupils speaking English as an additional language has risen since the previous report, and now represents over a fifth of the school population. Provision is good and well targeted to meet the needs of pupils at the early stages of learning English. Other minority group pupils also benefit from expert support, for instance, support for dual heritage pupils in Year 2, learning how to link the spoken and written word and sequence their ideas more clearly.

102 Across the school, in 'average' sets (groups) in literacy lessons, attainment varies. For instance in one Year 6 group, over half the pupils are expected to achieve lower levels

with their reading and writing in the national tests in English. There is not enough targeted support for this group of pupils within the school and teachers are not using ongoing assessment well enough to help guide learning and to modify long-term plans in order to meet pupils' needs. For instance, work using non-fiction texts which contained technical language proved difficult for less competent readers in one lesson.

103 At both seven and eleven years, speaking skills are well below average. Teachers work very hard to encourage pupils to join in lessons and are positive in their praise. Nevertheless, pupils lack confidence as speakers, particularly when talking to the whole class, and find it difficult to explain their ideas and feelings. By Year 6, few pupils initiate talk, ask questions or give their opinions freely. In one 'average attaining' class, only three pupils out of a group of twenty responded regularly to questions. Pupils are more talkative in smaller groups, where pupils from minority groups often take the lead. For instance, in Year 3, one Afro-Caribbean girl explained the word 'deal' and stated, 'He'll get the rats away and they'll give him the money. If he doesn't he gets the sack'. In both the infant and junior classes teachers focus successfully on extending pupils' vocabulary and exploring new words. An example is when more confident speakers in Year 2 found similar words to describe characters in a story they were sharing, and suggested they were 'greedy, bad-mannered and selfish'.

104 Despite standards in reading being well below those achieved nationally at seven and eleven years of age, pupils enjoy reading and have positive self-images. By Year 2, more capable pupils are reading with accuracy, fluency and understanding. Most pupils link letters and their sounds (phonics) and use this as a key skill to find out unknown words. However, there is a significant number of pupils with lower than average reading skills who still need to develop fluency with their reading. The level of books pupils read is not always appropriate; there is a need for closer monitoring of pupils' progress through the reading stages and the number of books pupils read at each level.

105 By the end of the junior classes, a minority of pupils read in a mature and confident way, and are expected to reach the highest levels in the national tests. Most other pupils read accurately, but with limited expression. They are still learning how to read with deeper understanding and meaning. Poor speaking skills and a narrow range of vocabulary inhibit pupils' exploration of character and plot. For example, words such as 'relishing' and 'judgement' prove difficult. Discussions with Year 6 show a wide range of interest in reading. One or two girls are authors themselves, having written short stories, while one boy found reading the instructions to his 'play station' interesting! Authors such as Dahl and Rowling have whipped up interest for some pupils. As one pupil suggested, 'I know Harry Potter books take a long time, but they are satisfying'.

106 Standards in writing are well below average at seven and eleven years of age. Pupils start Year 1 with well below average skills in literacy, with a significant minority still working within the early learning goals. Throughout the infant classes pupils learn how to link the spoken and written word and with the help of supporting adults, write simple sentences conveying meaning. By Year 2, the majority of writing and spelling reflects the characteristics of pupils' own speech. Examples such as, 'farma', 'jenros' and 'obediat' are typical of this 'average attaining' group. In an effective lesson, good modelling of writing by the teacher enables pupils to improve their writing skills.

107 From the start of the junior classes, writing is purposeful and pupils experiment with a range of different forms. They are taught how to structure their stories and hold the interest of the reader. Good teaching provides guidance through storyboards and story planners and so progress is satisfactory. However, in all year groups, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to read through, edit and improve their work, or to create longer

pieces of writing. This restricts the chances of some pupils attaining the higher levels in national tests.

108 Although handwriting and spelling are taught, there is a lack of consistency across the school, and standards are not high enough. By Year 6, finished pieces of work can lack care and are peppered with careless mistakes with spelling, punctuation and grammar. The following example is typical: 'Mrs Williams was saying goodbye to the children *has* they left school. The wind scattered the crisp packets *of* the floor'.

109 Pupils from all school groups work well together and behaviour in lessons is generally good. Boys and girls achieve similar standards, but by choice work in groups of the same gender. Pupils tend to listen rather than join in, although they talk more easily in small groups.

110 In the infant classes, the quality of teaching is sound overall, with pockets that are good. In the junior classes teaching is good. One lesson was judged excellent and there was one unsatisfactory class lesson. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils, use positive praise effectively and manage their classes well. They have good questioning skills, which are used to encourage pupils to join in with discussions. However, with the exception of drama, teachers use a limited range of strategies to develop pupils' speaking skills in everyday lessons. In the best lessons, teachers used ongoing assessment of pupils' work to guide their planning and work is well matched to the pupils' needs. In less effective lessons, the pitch of the learning is too high for the vast majority of pupils, who are reading and writing at lower levels. Marking is variable and at its best moves skills and learning on. In general, teachers' expectations of the quantity and quality of pupils' written work also vary, and could be higher.

111 The subject manager is new to the post, but has expertise and good subject knowledge. She has a clear plan of action for raising standards in English across the school. Monitoring teaching and learning in the junior school is her next focus. The writing assessment folder is a good start to tracking standards and progress in 'literacy sets' in each year group across the school. The drama coordinator also has expertise and guidelines which should prove useful in developing speaking skills throughout the school. The library is proving to be a valuable resource and is well used. Resources for reading are generally appropriate, although a lack of copies of a non-fiction text in one lesson held back progress.

MATHEMATICS

- Standards are below average at the end of both key stages.
- Standards of attainment are lower than those recorded at the time of the last inspection.
- The progress pupils make is uneven, although for many it is good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, with both strengths and areas for development.
- Assessment is not used consistently to ensure pupils are building on prior knowledge and understanding.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Good systems are developing to analyse results and track pupils' progress.

112 The results of the 2002 national tests for seven and eleven-year-olds were below the national average and they were average when compared with similar schools. There was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. The findings of the current inspection are that the attainment of pupils in the current Year 2 and Year 6 classes is below average. Close examination of previous work indicates that most, but not all pupils are

making at least satisfactory progress in their learning. Most average and more able pupils are making good progress and are achieving well. However, a minority of average, and less able pupils do not make the progress that they could, and as a result overall standards are not as high as they should be. In comparison to the national average, standards of attainment are lower than those recorded at the time of the last inspection.

113 In lessons, most average and more able pupils in Year 2 mentally add and subtract single digit numbers to 10. They calculate money sums up to 50 pence and higher, sometimes using their fingers to help them. These pupils confidently calculate the total cost of different items, and the change that needs to be given. The most able pupils achieve this task mentally. Less able pupils are often not secure in their knowledge of number facts to ten and so find calculating money difficult. In a lesson in a Year 2 class for example, pupils struggled to calculate the exact money they would require to pay for a bar of chocolate. A close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that more able pupils count accurately in 2s, 5s and 10s, understand the value of numbers up to 100, and confidently add and subtract 2 digit numbers up to 100. A significant minority of average and less able pupils find this difficult. Many of these pupils struggle to apply what they have learned in lessons to problem solving and other activities. Most pupils know the names and properties of some geometric shapes, and use standard units to measure.

114 In lessons, most average and more able pupils in Year 6 use mental recall of number facts when solving number problems. They use their knowledge of equivalent fractions when calculating fractions of whole numbers. A minority of average and less able pupils struggle with this work because they do not have sufficiently developed number skills, or understanding of how fractions work. More able pupils show a good understanding of the relationship between fractions, percentages and decimals and apply this when solving problems. A close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that more able pupils have a good understanding of the value of numbers up to one million and use the four number operations confidently. Average attaining pupils have a satisfactory understanding of numbers up to and beyond a thousand. Most pupils calculate the perimeter and areas of shapes and identify some of the properties of geometric shapes. All pupils collect data and create frequency charts and graphs and interpret their findings.

115 Overall the quality of teaching and learning in both key stages is satisfactory. In the lessons observed teachers explain clearly the learning objectives so that all pupils understand what they are expected to achieve. In the best lessons the work is well planned and organised so pupils of all abilities are able to learn well. These lessons begin with a rigorous mental session or game to engage the pupils in their learning. In a very good lesson for Year 5 pupils, for example, the teacher began with a well-paced mental session that engaged the pupils in their learning and promoted their mental skills. She used a range of effective strategies to help the pupils remember the concepts of 'parallel' and 'perpendicular', and the properties of different triangles. During the lesson the teacher effectively promoted pupils' skills of reasoning by challenging them to explain how they had calculated their answers. She checked the progress the pupils were making during the lesson and supported their learning very well. In response, the pupils concentrated hard and worked at a good pace, displaying very positive attitudes to their work.

116 In many lessons, teachers provide pupils with good strategies to help them calculate and check their answers. During most lessons teachers move around groups providing good support and guidance. Most teachers manage the pupils well, achieving good standards of behaviour and positive attitudes. In a very good lesson in a Year 3 class, for example, the teacher's effective management skills encouraged pupils to learn well and concentrate on their work. In response, the pupils worked effectively together in groups as they collected and organised their work, and evaluated what they had learned. The skills of negotiation and

levels of co-operation in this lesson were impressive. The teacher monitored the pupils' progress very well, providing guidance and support only where it was required. A few pupils who were still working on producing their graphs showed good levels of perseverance.

117 Teachers' questioning of pupils at the beginning and end of lessons is good at times. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of questions that are carefully chosen to check the understanding of individual and groups of pupils. In a minority of lessons, however, it is not used sufficiently well to assess what pupils understand or have learned. For example, too often the session at the end of the lesson is used to take pupils onto their next stage of learning without first checking what they have understood. Examination of pupils' previous work reveals the same weakness, where teachers do not provide pupils who experience difficulties with their work sufficient time or practice to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. It is clear that assessment information is not being used sufficiently well to ensure that appropriate work is provided that builds on pupils' previous learning. The quality of teachers' marking is variable. Pupils' work is not always marked, and that which is does not always provide pupils with guidance on how they can improve. Teachers often ask pupils to correct errors in their work but do not always ensure that these are completed.

118 Support staff are often used effectively to help pupils learn, in particular pupils with special educational needs. They support these pupils well at the beginning and end of lessons as well as with group work. In a lesson in Year 4 for example, the support assistant clearly understood what the pupils were expected to learn and was effective in helping them to achieve this. In lessons that are not so successful, the work provided for lower-attaining pupils is sometimes too difficult and this results in support staff providing too much help. Close examination of pupils' previous work identifies the same problem. Tasks are not always well matched to pupils' prior attainment, particularly that of a minority of average and less able pupils. As a consequence these pupils are not making the progress they should.

119 The curriculum is satisfactory. The school appropriately uses the National Numeracy Strategy to plan the curriculum and uses a published scheme to underpin the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding and practise their skills. However, insufficient consideration is given for the need to tailor the curriculum to the needs of all pupils. Too often teachers focus on the requirement of the strategy or the published scheme to set work for the pupils, which is sometimes inappropriate. On these occasions teachers do not build systematically on pupils' previous learning. Teachers often provide good opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects, for example in science, geography and history. In science, pupils measure force using 'newtons', in geography they graph the monthly temperatures in Greece, and in history use timelines and calculate the length of time monarchs were on the throne. Computer programs are used well to support pupils' learning in this subject, with many examples of pupils creating graphs and pie charts. During the inspection, pupils were often seen using computers to develop their number skills.

120 Procedures for assessing pupils' levels of achievement and checking their progress are satisfactory. Teachers record pupils' progress against 'key objective' statements for the elements of mathematics covered. The school analyses pupils' performance in national tests and uses these and the results from the annual non-statutory tests in Years 3, 4 and 5 to set targets and to check pupils' progress. This information is being used well to target groups of pupils for additional support. The school is also beginning to analyse test results to ascertain where particular weaknesses lie in pupils' understanding of different elements of the curriculum. All classes have targets and there are also targets for each pupil in Years 3 to 6, although currently these are having limited effect on individual progress.

121 The subject manager has only recently been appointed to the post but is enthusiastic and keen to develop her role. She monitors teachers' planning but has not observed any

lessons. Working with a numeracy consultant she has identified a weakness in the provision of appropriate work to meet the needs of all pupils. Since the last inspection many staff have attended numeracy training courses and have observed a leading teacher. The school has a satisfactory number of resources that are used effectively.

SCIENCE

- Standards are below average by the age of seven but improve by the age of eleven.
- Good teaching helps lift standards in the juniors.
- There is a positive focus on the use of investigative skills through the school.
- Teaching for younger pupils is not always well matched to their needs or the planned curriculum.
- Resources for science are good overall, and good use is made of ICT.
- Presentation of work in the juniors could be improved.
- There is a good emphasis on scientific language, particularly for older pupils.

122 Current standards by the age of seven are below average and by the age of eleven they are average. Results by the end of Year 2 are not as good as at the time of the last inspection when standards were judged to be above average. By the end of Year 6 the picture is similar to the previous inspection when pupils were judged to be in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory improvement for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. More emphasis has been placed on the investigative aspects of science and this has resulted in improvements, particularly in the juniors where teaching is good.

123 There have been recent changes in the subject leadership, curriculum and staff in both key stages. The current leadership is a temporary post, with the subject being managed by the acting deputy headteacher until a new appointment is made. The curriculum now follows the government guidelines for science, providing a systematic approach to the building of knowledge and skills through the school. Staff changes have involved the appointment of new teachers and the changing of existing staff between the key stages. These changes are positive for the older pupils where the teaching is well planned and informed. However in the infants aspects of teaching and learning for some pupils do not represent a cohesive and planned curriculum based on a clear knowledge and understanding of the needs of younger pupils. The transfer of children to Year 1 is not supported by well-informed assessments and this results in some pupils being taught at inappropriate levels to meet their individual needs. For example, pupils learn about 'blocking the light' in 'physical processes' and 'living and non living things' in 'life processes and living things'. For most Year 1 pupils this is too difficult when the majority are working at a low level in relation to their initial baseline and end of Foundation year assessments.

124 Teaching is not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs. In Year 2, for example, the teaching of science does not always take into account what the pupils already know in order to build on and extend their learning sufficiently or appropriately. In a lesson concerning 'push and pull' the content was virtually identical to that taught in Year 1, giving little opportunity for pupils to make progress in their knowledge. Standards by the end of the key stage are affected by the lack of achievement overall.

125 Progress accelerates in the juniors where teaching is clearly focused on learning that is based upon pupils' previous knowledge. Throughout the key stage pupils understand the basis of a fair test, as when in Year 3 pupils test the porosity of rocks and stones, deciding that because a roof has to keep you warm and dry, 'it needs to be waterproof and not too heavy!' In Year 4 pupils understand the concept of a fair test in that 'all things have to be the same except one' but do not understand the term 'variable' when learning about

temperature. By Year 6 pupils understand the term 'variable' in an experiment to 'investigate whether the brightness of a bulb can be changed by changing the wires in a circuit'. Throughout the school there is good emphasis placed upon the use of scientific vocabulary. For example in Key Stage 1 pupils decide which toys need a 'push' or a 'pull' to make them move and in Year 3 pupils recall the words 'absorb' and 'permeability' during the discussion at the end of the lesson. In Year 6, the teacher encourages the pupils to use 'science speak' in their explanations. This expectation represents a challenge for many pupils as they try to explain their findings scientifically.

126 Standards of spoken English have an impact on standards in science. A Year 2 pupil asks, "what is a sledge?" in a lesson on forces, and two Year 6 pupils show reluctance to ask for help during an electrical investigation. Some pupils' writing skills also inhibit their progress. In Year 3 pupils make good progress in their knowledge of various materials; however, when recording the results some pupils do not complete copying the initial sentence from the board. Support for the less able pupils in lessons is very often good and well focused. In some lessons, however, the level of support is insufficient and in others, although caring and supportive, it does not sufficiently extend pupils' learning, encourage pupils to think for themselves or present a challenging style of questioning.

127 Scrutiny of past work shows that challenge for higher attaining pupils extends their understanding throughout the school. However, in Year 1 this challenge is inappropriate as the same 'level 3' work was seen in all books, including those pupils targeted for additional support. In discussion with Year 2 pupils it is clear that they have a limited knowledge and understanding which does not reflect the levels seen in their books. Although there are specific units of work for pupils in the infants, the teaching is not always based upon a clear understanding of what is expected at each stage of learning. This results in assumptions being made concerning pupils' knowledge, and as a result work is sometimes pitched at inappropriate levels. This affects the build of skills and knowledge year on year in this key stage.

128 In Years 3 to 6 more able pupils are given good opportunities to record their own ideas about what they have found out, but some younger pupils pay insufficient attention to good presentation in their books. A good range of teaching methods are adopted to encourage pupils to think and plan, both individually and in pairs and groups. Year 5 pupils devise a 'healthy eating' game, involving a good level of 'teamwork' and planning. A strength of all lessons is the very good relationships overall. Pupils respond well to their teachers and enjoy their lessons. Teachers control their pupils well in the classroom and as a result no time is lost in managing behaviour. The clear time slots in which work is to be completed, the pace of lessons and the high expectation of pupils' achievements are good features of the teaching for these pupils. Assessments of units of work are completed each term and analysis of more formal tests provides teachers with evidence of weaker areas on which to focus, such as the investigative and experimental aspects including scientific vocabulary.

129 ICT is used effectively to support science lessons. For example, in a lesson concerning the investigation of various methods of recording the temperature of water, the teacher introduced the use of a digital sensor. Satisfactory use is also made of numeracy in science, as when pupils in the juniors prepare graphs and tables when recording their results. All pupils are fully involved in all aspects of science.

130 The previous subject manager left the school at the end of the previous term and the deputy headteacher is 'caretaking' the role on a temporary basis. The planning of science across the school has improved since the last inspection, but the monitoring of teaching and learning needs to be considered as a matter of priority in order to provide pupils in Years 1

and 2 with their full entitlement, as the insecure elements in teaching will inevitably have an effect on standards over time.

ART AND DESIGN

- Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 are not as good as at the time of the previous inspection.
- Progress is good overall but accelerates in Years 3 to 6.
- Teaching is sound overall and good in the juniors.
- Older pupils experience a good range of skills, media and techniques.
- Pupils' work is celebrated through good displays.
- There are good links with other subjects.
- The subject manager provides very good leadership.
- Skills need building more thoughtfully and systematically for younger pupils.

131 Standards in art are average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress overall, including those with special educational needs or English as a second language, resulting in the high standards seen in the juniors. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection by Year 6, when standards were average, but is less positive by Year 2, where standards were previously judged to be above expectations.

132 The existing scheme of work has been retained, together with additions from national guidelines for art, and an improvement in resources includes the new 'art room'. Teachers' increasing confidence and expertise has helped to raise standards in the juniors. Examples of work around the school, in particular by older pupils, reflect all aspects of the art curriculum. Pupils' work is valued; displays are attractive and represent a very good level of creativity. Progress is good overall from Years 1 to 6. However, learning accelerates in the juniors in all aspects of art so that by Year 6 pupils know a range of famous artists and discuss at length their different styles of painting. They know what they like and why, confidently explaining the artist's style and mood, talking about surrealism in a mature and informed way as they explain the work of Salvador Dalí.

133 As in the previous inspection, Year 2 pupils share their knowledge concerning Lowry in terms of the type of pictures he painted and explain how they have coloured a worksheet representing his style. Examples in art folders show that pupils have experienced printing on fabric and painted a colour wheel. In a good lesson in Year 2, pupils use pencils to draw bold repeating outlines forming 'exploding shapes', some involving shading. Through good expectation of pupils' achievements a 'working atmosphere' is created in which pupils strive to do well. Pupils produce good drawings that show 'light and shade' and there are good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work. However, in conversation Year 2 pupils display a limited range of skills and are unaware of basic elements such as primary colours, colour mixing and pattern.

134 Pupils' work in the juniors shows that teachers have a good level of expertise and explore a good range of media to develop skills and knowledge in art throughout the key stage. For example, in Year 5 pupils experience 'clay work' in their interpretation of a three-dimensional head. They are skilfully shown the necessary techniques of joining clay by using 'slip' and 'cross hatching', how to build and mould and use good resources such as a 'garlic press' to produce 'hair' for the clay head. The area of 3D is further developed using abstract designs and 'moving figures' involving the use of foil and plaster of Paris. A good feature of many lessons is the time allowed to complete a piece of work or to make a significant amount of effort towards its completion. Teaching here is consistently strong.

135 There are extensive examples of artwork in other subjects in Key Stage 2, including an attractive Victorian lace and appliqué collage, Victorian 'press patterns' to reflect the style of William Morris, 'Ancient Greek' clay plates, necklaces and pots and Hindu and Sikh examples to include Rangoli patterns using dyed rice in attractive designs. ICT is used effectively to support art and design. Examples of pupils' work are stored in personal files on the computer and can be accessed very efficiently, for example by a pupil to illustrate a point in an art discussion with the inspector concerning 'pointillism' by Seurat! Good use is also made of sketchbooks in Key Stage 2, both as assessment tools and also to test ideas and techniques.

136 Over time pupils learn and remember the names and styles of famous artists. In conversation Year 6 pupils demonstrate an extensive knowledge of a range of artists (nine altogether!), all of whom they can discuss in terms of varying styles, naming aspects they like and dislike and giving reasons why. This is very impressive, indicating both knowledge and understanding, and is representative of different groups of pupils. The class assessment records are collated and given to the subject manager annually, as well as ongoing monitoring and support of all aspects of art and design through displays and sketchbooks. Art makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development through the range of experiences offered and the visits to local galleries.

137 Leadership is very good. The subject manager is highly motivated and has a high level of expertise, which is shared with staff and colleagues in other schools. Her obvious enthusiasm is a driving force and has been the spearhead of many art initiatives. This vibrancy needs to be fed into the programme of work for younger pupils in order to raise the profile of art to the high standards seen in the juniors. Resources are extensive, well organised and monitored. Books, videos, pictures and photographs provide a good range of support material, which is in frequent use. The art room is used to store materials, house the kiln and provides a very good working environment for creative development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- Pupils have first hand practical experiences.
- Skills are built up systematically from reception to Year 6.
- The topics motivate and interest boys and girls equally.
- Good use is made of standardised sheets to help pupils record each aspect of the design process.
- Pupils undertake the complete process of planning, making and designing during each topic.
- Pupils are encouraged to be imaginative, and consequently items produced are individual.
- Higher attaining pupils do not have extension activities to challenge them further.

138 Standards by the age of seven and eleven are as expected for this time of year, and pupils in both key stages are on course to achieve national expectations. All pupils, including pupils who use English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. There has been good improvement since the time of the previous inspection, when low standards were identified as a key issue. The school has responded positively and has addressed the weaknesses identified. The voluntary national scheme has been adopted and pupils now have access to a wider range of materials, tools and techniques. Pupils have opportunities to plan and evaluate their own work.

139 No judgments can be made about the teaching in either key stage as only two lessons were observed. However discussions with pupils, together with the lessons

observed and evidence of work from last term, show that pupils are making satisfactory progress in their learning across the school.

140 Teachers in Year 1 successfully lay the foundations for each element of the design process. Good use is made of standardised sheets, which are particularly helpful for pupils with limited writing skills. In discussion with Year 2 pupils, most can explain their work on Joseph and his multicoloured coat. They understand that they made a pattern first and know they used tape, glue and staples to fix the materials together, although some have difficulty expressing their ideas. The work on display shows pupils have used their imagination in their designs and have worked carefully.

141 Scrutiny of work in Key Stage 2 shows a progressive build up of skills. Food technology elements are incorporated, with work in Year 3 enhancing pupils' literacy skills as they describe the taste and texture of the sandwiches they have made. In a well-taught lesson in Year 4 good use was made of a range of pop-up books to stimulate pupils' interest. The teacher's use of correct technical language helped pupils to understand and use terms such as 'prototype', 'mechanism' and 'scoring'. Some pupils did not understand they were making a prototype and started decorating it, but sensitive teacher intervention at this point prevented them wasting time.

142 Work in Year 5 shows appropriate coverage and understanding of using mechanisms such as pulleys. Good use is made of art skills to draw and label a diagram of a crank handle. By Year 6 pupils are evaluating in appropriate depth aspects of design that need improving or modifying. However, some pupils have very poor mathematical skills and need considerable help measuring. This restricts their ability to undertake some aspects of their design work. Not enough activities are built in to challenge more able pupils. Work displayed from this year shows that pupils' creativity is promoted and valued. Pupils plan, design and evaluate designs for shelters. They study aspects of construction and joining, which include looking at buildings and assembling a tent inside the class! Their finished models are imaginative and individual.

143 The subject manager has undertaken training. She effectively monitors planning and pupils' work on display. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social development as pupils regularly work together collaboratively. Some topics contribute to pupils' cultural development, for example through pupils discussing breads from different cultures when undertaking sandwich designs.

HUMANITIES

- Standards in history and geography are above average by the age of eleven.
- Standards have improved in both subjects since the previous inspection.
- Pupils have good knowledge and understanding, as well as the skills to build on this.
- The use of drama and first-hand experiences contribute to pupils' understanding.
- Better use is made of numeracy than literacy skills.
- Teaching is good in both subjects.
- Both subjects are led and managed effectively.

144 As in the previous inspection, standards in history and geography are as expected for pupils by the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, pupils have achieved standards that are above expectations in both history and geography, which is an improvement in both subjects. In geography, environmental studies are given a high priority and Northfield Road Primary School is rightly proud of being the first Dudley School to gain 'environmental status' as a result of the pupils' response to 'green' issues.

145 In Year 1 there is a satisfactory understanding of the differences and similarities between 'then and now' in history. Younger pupils have plotted their families and important events during their short life span. By the age of seven pupils talk enthusiastically about famous people who have helped us, such as Florence Nightingale, as well as famous explorers like Christopher Columbus, Captain Cook and Neil Armstrong. In Year 3, pupils research 'Invaders and Settlers' and know of the legacy of the Romans, particularly in the development of roads. In Year 4 pupils consider the Aztecs and compare the life styles of Cortez and Montezuma. In Year 5, pupils have research the Victorians, culminating in a Victorian school day when pupils and teachers immerse themselves in realistic (and therefore sometimes frightening!) role-play. In Year 6 pupils compare the similarities and differences of life in Ancient Greece with their own. In their written work and conversation, pupils show that they have understanding as well as knowledge of this broad sweep of history.

146 In Year 1 pupils talking about the weather use correct terminology such as 'wind', 'storm' and 'hurricane', and know vocabulary such as 'river' and 'hill'. Their knowledge of the local area is improved by studying the different shops in the locality. In Year 2, pupils talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about the use of transport in Netherton and have used tallying to record a traffic survey outside the school. Pupils in the juniors build a sound and progressive understanding of mapping skills, from simple plans of their classroom and their routes and methods of travelling to school at the age of seven, to a study of different places using co-ordinates on a range of local maps by the age of eleven. There are good local studies and comparisons are made at both key stages with the contrasting areas of Clent and Ludlow.

147 In Year 3, pupils study the environment and consider recycling, which includes carrying out research at home. This information is then analysed and recorded graphically. Concern for the environment is explored in the forests of Brazil, and pupils compare holiday needs to the climate of different regions such as skiing in Austria, activity holidays in mountainous regions or relaxing in the sunshine. In Year 5 pupils trace the decline in industry and the subsequent changes in land use from coal mining to light industry and shopping development. Comparisons are made with developing countries such as India. A study of rivers in the British Isles includes the development of mapping skills together with precise vocabulary such as 'source', 'erosion', 'meander' and 'estuary'. When studying the development of rivers, pupils have discussed the effects of flooding on communities. Pupils in Year 6 have compared the climates of Greece and the England as well as the development of agriculture and transport.

148 In both history and geography first hand experiences through fieldwork are given a high priority, which adds considerably to pupils' understanding. Memorable 'focus' days on historical periods such as the 'Vikings' and 'Victorians' have been tremendously valuable in allowing pupils to apply their skills and knowledge. Mapping and environmental skills have been enriched when exploring the locality. In discussion, pupils in Year 6 enthusiastically share their findings when exploring the 'leftovers' of their industrial heritage such as canal transport and the polluted 'sticky residue' found in the resulting 'spoil heaps'. Residential experience has enabled older pupils to investigate mapping skills, rivers and soil types as well as contributing significantly to their personal and social skills.

149 There are some links with other subjects, with drama giving increasingly valuable opportunities for the encouragement of speaking, personal and social skills. Given the weaknesses identified in pupils' speaking skills, especially in situations involving larger groups, this aspect could be given more consideration in other subjects as well. Opportunities to develop literacy skills are there, but focus mainly on note taking, bullet points and non-narrative writing. However, opportunities to develop writing skills are missed

when pupils are allowed to complete worksheets or record their work in words or short phrases. There is less evidence of pupils being encouraged to use their knowledge and understanding to produce extended pieces of writing. Numeracy skills are well promoted in geography when using scales and co-ordinates in mapping. Effective use is made of bar charts, column and line graphs when recording traffic surveys, analysing the recycling of rubbish or recording temperatures. Designing Greek pottery and Victorian pomanders have added to design skills, and pupils' artwork reflects the study of the environment and their industrial heritage. Computer technology was used very well for pupils to record the reigns of Tudor monarchs in the form of a column graph, and there are good examples of ICT being used to promote study and research skills when investigating Ancient and Modern Greece.

150 Care of the environment and energy saving has given a boost to pupils' citizenship skills. Pupils have responded admirably to the challenge of being given the additional responsibility to care for the environment through the 'Green Team'. 'Energy Champions' have resulted from studies of wind power, transport and pollution. Citizenship is promoted through making decisions on the design of litterbins, recycling materials, collecting litter or planning how to improve their playground. Pupils also consider the legacy of previous societies, such as democracy in Ancient Greece. History and geography contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by encouraging pupils to reflect on the beauty of their local environment. First hand experience through fieldwork involves them in visiting fine local buildings such as local churches and Wightwick Manor, as well as a conservation area when planting trees at Bumblehole.

151 Overall teaching is good in both history and geography. Although no teaching was observed in geography in the infants, both lessons in the juniors were good with good progress being made. Teaching in the five lessons observed in history ranged from satisfactory to very good. Where teaching is at its best with older pupils, skills are taught well. Introductions are brief, activities match the needs of the various ability groups and lesson summaries are used effectively to check what progress has been made. In particular the teaching during the Year 5 'Victorian Day' was consistently very good, as was the quality of learning. The pace of each lesson was thorough and challenging and pupils responded in an excellent manner, with enthusiasm, enjoyment and behaviour living up to true Victorian standards!

152 Subject managers give good leadership and management to history and geography: policies are informative and useful and both are clear in their roles. They each handle a budget and are expected to justify their spending. Neither has been able to contribute to standards by observing and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning but both have produced a folder of work representative of the minimum standards required at each age group. They have monitored planning and review work in books. Both managers have a detailed action plan for the future with both subjects being prioritised in the School Improvement Plan for 2003-2004. Although the history manager has only been in post since September 2002, she is reviewing the coverage of the periods of British history to evaluate whether the study period from 1930 could be included.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- Standards are in line with expectations by the age of seven, indicating good improvement.
- By the age of eleven, standards are above what is expected, which represents very good improvement.
- Teaching is very good; teachers enjoy teaching ICT and this motivates pupils in their learning.

- Skills are built up systematically from reception to Year 6.
- Pupils make good use of ICT skills in different subjects.
- The very good resources are used efficiently, giving pupils throughout the school plenty of first-hand experience.
- Pupils' progress and attainment in ICT skills are carefully tracked in every class.
- Very detailed evidence portfolios illustrate pupils' learning across the school.
- Detailed assessments are undertaken, although the evidence is not dated or levelled.
- An enthusiastic subject manager who gives good support to staff leads ICT very well.

153 Standards by the age of seven are as expected and younger pupils make good progress. Standards by the age of eleven are above the national average, indicating further good progress in the juniors. All pupils, including those with English as an additional language or special educational needs, make similar progress.

154 There has been a significant improvement in the provision for ICT since the time of the previous inspection, when it was identified as a key issue. The school has responded very positively and has worked hard to address the weaknesses identified. Teaching and support staff have received training and are now confident to deliver the subject. Resources have been significantly increased and staff make good use of them in most subjects. As a result of their concerted efforts the delivery of ICT is one of the strengths of the school.

155 No judgments can be made overall about the teaching in the infants as only one lesson was seen. Discussions with Year 1 and Year 2 pupils, together with the lesson observed and evidence portfolios, show that pupils make good progress. A range of programs is used to support most subjects. For example pupils use their skills to label plants, match symbols on a map of Britain, create their own art pictures and have been introduced to simple modelling activities such as 'dressing teddy'.

156 Year 1 pupils enjoy using the computer suite and having access to individual computers. They are building up their keyboard skills and many can copy text. While teachers do their best, children who need more guidance sometimes have to wait, as there is not enough additional support. Year two pupils are building on their previous learning and are developing their computer skills successfully. In a well-led lesson the teacher used the white board to demonstrate how to use the space bar to add punctuation. Because of explicit teaching in the lesson many understood that ICT could help them to improve their written work.

157 All the teaching observed in Key Stage 2 was very good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and very good subject knowledge. They have a clear idea of the skills being taught and explain complex ideas well.

158 ICT is successfully integrated to extend learning in a range of subjects. During the inspection week, good use was made of ICT to support science, music, history, mathematics and English. In a well-taught science lesson (while pupils were investigating various methods of recording the temperature of water) the teacher introduced the use of a digital sensor. This captured the pupils' imagination (some pupils actually gasping with excitement!) and this really motivated them when they returned to their own recording work.

159 By Year 6, pupils have plenty of experience of all aspects of the planned curriculum. Boys and girls are all succeeding because the teaching approach adopted involves them equally. Pupils who need more practice to consolidate their skills are often given targeted support. An example was seen in a very successful Year 6 lesson on spreadsheet modelling. Two pupils had one-to-one support in the library for part of the session and a modified task, which helped them with their calculations on area and perimeter.

There is evidence of regular use of the Internet for research purposes, opportunities to take part in multi-media presentations and regular use of e-mails. ICT makes a very good contribution to pupils' social development, with many opportunities to work together and collaborate. Special reward certificates encourage pupils to do their best.

160 ICT is very well led by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject manager. Her priorities include further lesson observations, creating a web page and purchasing more interactive white boards.

MUSIC

- Standards are in line with those expected nationally.
- There has been good improvement by older pupils.
- Clear guidelines are improving teacher confidence.
- Singing is good and supported by the subject manager's expertise.
- Assessment of pupils' progress does not always identify the next step in learning.

161 At seven and eleven years of age pupils achieve similar standards in music to those found nationally. Since the last inspection, music has improved in the junior classes and is now satisfactory. This is because the school has clear guidelines for teaching music, which enable teachers to teach and explore music with greater confidence. An example is the wider use of tuned and untuned instruments in lessons, which is adding to the quality of learning in music. This is evident in Year 1, when pupils use a range of instruments to explore how sounds are made and to produce simple patterns of long and short sounds.

162 In the juniors lessons now have clear learning objectives, and by Year 6 pupils understand and use a range of musical vocabulary. In Year 6, pupils explore the mood created by different pieces of music and identify how the composer has used different musical elements, such as tempo and texture. Pupils work steadily and respond in a personal way, linking the images the music creates to their own ideas, for example suggesting that Mahler's music is 'like a warning that something is going to happen'.

163 The expertise and influence of the music subject specialist is evident in the good standard of singing within the school. Pupils sing tunefully, enter on cue and perform well with others in simple two and three-part rounds. The school choir is proud of its reputation and performs in local events and concerts. The quality of accompaniment in singing and assemblies sets the expectation for a good level of performance and enhances learning. In a similar way, pupils benefit from the peripatetic music lessons with a range of instruments. The confident skills of a small ensemble enhanced an assembly during the inspection. All school groups have the opportunity to play a musical instrument and to sing in the school choir, including pupils with special educational needs. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make a positive contribution in lessons. Behaviour is good and pupils work well together as performers.

164 Only a limited number of lessons were observed, but the quality of teaching is sound and this enables pupils to make satisfactory progress. Lessons are well planned and instruments accessible and well cared for. At times, repetition and limited pace can dampen interest and enthusiasm, such as pupils having to wait while the whole group responds to the same question. As yet, teachers' assessment of pupils' understanding is not guiding the next step in learning.

165 The subject manager has expertise and music is managed well. The clear focus on raising standards in the junior school has been successful, and the input from the 'Music Project' beneficial to the quality of teaching and learning. The guidelines for music and the

support of the subject manager has helped less confident colleagues to improve their teaching skills. Music is appropriately resourced.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Standards are in line with expectations at both key stages.
- Pupils make good progress, especially in dance, where standards are higher.
- Teaching is sound overall and has improved since the previous inspection.
- Pupils are responsive and work well with each other.
- Good attention is paid to health and safety issues.
- Good leadership in dance, with opportunities for all pupils.

166 There has been satisfactory improvement in physical education since the previous inspection. Standards are now judged to be in line with expectations by the end of Year 2, rather than above as they were at the time of the last inspection. However, pupils are now entering school with limited physical skills and confidence, and more work is needed to bring them up to average standards. In the dance lesson in Year 1, for example, pupils' attainment was below the expected standard, so progress through the key stage is good. Standards remain average by the end of Year 6, as they were at the last inspection. Standards in dance, praised before, remain good, due to the expertise of the subject manager and the strong tradition of dance in the school.

167 Facilities for physical education are variable, and have some impact on provision. Internal space is good, with two halls available, although one is really only suitable for dance lessons. Outside facilities are more challenging, with a sloping playground and no sports field; the school makes use of the local park where it can, but this is a public area with the usual attendant problems. Pupils go swimming once a week in Year 4; current attainment suggests that the majority will meet government targets by the end of the year, although cultural issues mean some Asian pupils do not take part. Outdoor and adventurous activities are catered for on residential visits.

168 Only lessons in dance and gymnastics were seen in the course of the inspection, so it is not possible to comment on standards in games. Gymnastics lessons, both in the juniors, are well planned; teachers have a clear scheme to follow and are helping pupils to build on existing skills. Good use is made of demonstration by different pupils, to encourage others and develop ideas, although pupils are more confident to share ideas in pairs, rather than with the whole class. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 made less progress, partly due to the disruptive behaviour of a few boys. In a Year 3 lesson pace was good, with high expectations and lots of activity.

169 Pupils in Year 1 found the demands of a dance lesson difficult, and the teacher, recognising this, sensibly adapted the lesson accordingly. Pupils were able to perform individual movements but found the idea of sequencing them more challenging. Year 2 pupils were more successful in linking their actions together. By Year 5 all pupils were producing a variety of movements to represent a fairground ride, with some inventive and original ideas.

170 Pupils' learning is generally good, with particular strengths in their partner and group work, where they share ideas and collaborate well. There are good relationships with the teachers, which leads to time being used productively. Teaching is always sound and sometimes good. The better teaching has a clearer focus on improving skills, with more pace and higher expectations of pupils' capabilities leading to greater challenge. Good attention is paid to health and safety, with pupils encouraged to take part in risk assessment: one pupil identified the inspector as a potential hazard! Warm-ups are very

good, and pupils are very aware of their importance. The excellent quality of one in Year 5, and the pupils' familiarity with the actions and music they used, argue that this is a regular and effective feature. The main area for improvement is to help pupils to identify what makes a movement one of quality, whether in dance or gymnastics; doing it well, rather than just doing it, with an emphasis on poise, balance and control.

171 The school places good emphasis on inclusion, an example being a physically handicapped pupil who is a member of the netball club. All pupils take part in the school's dance festival, with parents and peers as an audience, and many dance in outside events too. In one lesson pupils who had forgotten their kit were involved as 'assessors' and were expected to report on their classmates' performance, identifying good work. This is good practice that could be shared more widely.

172 The subject manager for physical education is new to both the school and the subject, but is developing her own expertise as well as planning for improvement in the subject, and has a clear agenda. The dance co-ordinator is both experienced and well qualified, and leads this area with energy and great commitment. She is well aware of current issues and works hard and successfully to promote dance throughout the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- Standards are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress in their learning.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leadership and management are good.

173 By the age of seven and eleven, pupils achieve standards that meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Since the last inspection the standards achieved by seven-year-olds have been maintained while those achieved by eleven-year-olds have improved. Pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well.

174 By the age of seven, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of important festivals in the Christian and Islamic religions, for example Christmas, Easter and Eid. They know about some of the customs and practices relating to the period of Advent, for example lighting candles and making advent calendars. Pupils learn about characters from the Bible, for example Noah, and study stories from the New Testament, for example the 'Good Samaritan' and the healing of the paralysed man. During a focus day, pupils in Year 2 made Eid cards and created 'Mendhi' patterns. A bilingual teacher who works in the school talked to the pupils about her faith and played words from the Qu'ran that had been set to a popular rhythm. Close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that pupils know that Muslims attend a mosque to worship, and that they wash before prayers. Pupils have some knowledge of celebrations and special occasions, for example weddings and infant baptism in the Christian church, and the Islamic ceremony of welcoming a baby.

175 By the age of eleven, pupils have a developing understanding of the beliefs and practices of some of the world religions, for example Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. They know about key events in the life of Jesus, how he was baptised in the river Jordan and performed miracles. Through their visits to a local Christian church, pupils develop an understanding of the symbolism of adult baptism and the concept of change that it demonstrates. In discussions, pupils in Year 6 recalled key characters from the Old Testament, for example Daniel, Moses and Noah, and stories from the New Testament, for example how Jesus healed a blind man. They displayed a good knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the followers of Islam, in particular issues

relating to Islamic laws including fasting. They recalled respectfully how a Muslim pupil in their class had talked to them about his faith. He had spoken about going to the mosque and explained how he had to wash before he prayed. He also read parts of the Qu'ran to the pupils in the class. Close examination of pupils' previous work indicates satisfactory knowledge of stories and practices to be found in Hinduism, for example the celebration of the festival of Divali. During a focus day pupils in Year 3 studied the story of Rama and Sita, made puppets, and later performed the story in a family assembly.

176 Teaching and learning are good. Teaching in all the lessons observed was good. Each of the lessons was well planned and organised with clear learning objectives. In a good lesson in a Year 2 class, pupils acted out the story of the 'Good Samaritan'. In this lesson, the teacher organised and managed the pupils well and as a result pupils were responsive and well behaved. As they prepared their presentations, pupils worked effectively within their groups displaying good levels of co-operation and positive relationships. Similarly, during a visit to a local church, pupils behaved well and showed great respect as they listened to a church leader talk about the history of the church and the ceremony of adult baptism. Teachers value the contribution that pupils make in lessons and effectively promote pupils' self-esteem. On most occasions, but not all, teachers use the session at the end of lessons effectively to consolidate learning and check pupils' knowledge and understanding through careful questioning.

177 Scrutiny of pupils' books indicates that there is thorough coverage of all appropriate areas, giving pupils the opportunity to extend their knowledge and understanding. The quality of the written work is more variable, however, both in terms of presentation and content. In some classes pupils have the chance to write at some length and from different viewpoints, for example recording what they have learned or writing more personally, but this is not consistent across the different year groups. In some books there is little detail and pupils do not have enough time to develop their work at any length. At other times the writing is identical for all pupils.

178 The curriculum is satisfactory and provides for the study of many of the major world religions. Pupils visit three local Christian churches to support their learning in this subject, but these visits are not extended to places of worship of other religions. Art and design is used well to enhance the curriculum. Pupils make puppets, and create 'rangoli' and 'mendhi' patterns, with some pupils using a computer program to produce their design. Pupils in Year 6 researched 'Ramadan' and the 'Night of Power' on the Internet. Good use is made of religious education to support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, with opportunities for them to work together and reflect on their place in the world. Pupils undertake assessments at the end of each unit of study to check their understanding. There are plans to use these assessments to monitor pupils' progress as they move through the school. The subject manager has worked effectively in raising the profile of this subject. She has organised special events and observed the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.