

INSPECTION REPORT

FAIRHAVEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wordsley, Stourbridge,
West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103786

Headteacher: Mr J Dallaway

Reporting inspector: Mrs Judith Hicks
2063

Dates of inspection: 21st – 24th October 2002

Inspection number: 246316

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior school

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Barnett Lane
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Stourbridge
West Midlands

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Rev. David Picken

Date of previous inspection: March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2063	Judith Hicks	Registered inspector	The Foundation Stage Art and design Music	The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13762	Norman Shelley	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3858	Alan Blank	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
25384	Robert Bonner	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
28686	Jennifer Clayphan	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs Educational inclusion	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fairhaven is a community primary school of average size. There are 215 pupils on roll this term, and numbers are set to rise to 236 after Christmas, with a second intake of children into reception. The pupils are nearly all of white British heritage, with a few originating from other parts of Europe or having mixed heritage. Two pupils are from British Asian backgrounds. Although they speak English as an additional language, they have a very secure grasp of the language and do not need any special help. Unemployment is low in the area and very few pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. Numbers on the register of special educational needs (SEN) are below average, but there are a few pupils with significant learning difficulties. One pupil has a statement of SEN. The children's attainment on entry to reception is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly effective school that provides its pupils with a good all-round education. Almost all of the pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons and other school activities, and have an enthusiastic approach in all that they do. Because of the good quality of teaching, the pupils' progress is better than would be predicted and overall standards are high. Fairhaven is very well led and effectively managed, providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in English and well above average in mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Teaching is good overall, and very good at the upper junior stage.
- Fairhaven makes very good provision for the pupils' moral and social development, and has an excellent programme of personal, social and health education; as a result the pupils' attitudes, relationships and behaviour are strengths of the school.
- Leadership is strong at every level.
- The use of ICT to support school organisation, the curriculum and pupils' learning is excellent.
- Parents hold the school in high regard and strongly support what staff are doing.

What could be improved

- There are no major issues for the school to address. A few minor matters are identified in the full report, and these will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Fairhaven was last inspected in March 1998. At that time the school's procedures for assessing and recording the pupils' progress were identified as needing improvement. Considerable work has gone into tackling this area, which is now very good. Test results have improved and significant progress has been made in the provision for and use of ICT. The school has developed an excellent programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education and has gained recognition as a health-promoting school. The accommodation and grounds have been developed imaginatively. The good quality of teaching identified at the time of the last inspection has been sustained. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	C	A	A
Mathematics	A	C	A	A
Science	A	B	A	A

Key	
top 5% nationally	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Results in recent national tests have fluctuated depending on the numbers with special educational needs in each year-group, but the overall trend is one of sustained improvement. This is because the school sets challenging targets, tracks the pupils' progress carefully and provides good teaching. As the table above shows, last year's Year 6 pupils performed very well in summer 2002, with results well above average for the age-group. In the 2002 national assessments for seven-year-olds, pupils now in Year 3 scored above the national average in reading and well above in writing. Mathematics scores were very high. Overall these results compare very favourably with those of similar schools.

The inspection showed that current standards in Year 6 are above average in English, with strengths in speaking and listening. The pupils read with enjoyment and good understanding and write fluently. Handwriting is very good and the pupils present their work to a high standard. The pupils do very well in both mathematics and science, working at a level well above average for their age. The use of ICT is part of their everyday experience, and pupils in the upper junior classes show exceptional confidence and a high level of skill in their use of computers. Standards are above average in physical education, especially games and sporting activities. Art and design and technology are also above average and there are strengths in music and drama. In the remaining subjects the pupils achieve standards that are similar to others in their age-group. With high expectations and very good attitudes to learning, very good progress is made in the juniors, especially in Years 5 and 6.

By the end of Year 2 the pupils' performance in English and science is above average, and well above in mathematics. The pupils read with understanding and are beginning to write fluently, presenting their work very well for their age-group. Their skills with computers are above average and they also do well in physical education. With very secure teaching of basic skills, the pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Progress is also good in reception. From an average starting point, these younger children comfortably achieve the national goals for their age-group, exceeding them in their mathematics and physical development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils' sensible attitudes and enthusiasm for school contribute a lot to their learning and personal development.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The atmosphere in school is friendly and relaxed. Very good recreational facilities contribute to good behaviour at lunchtime.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils like and respect their teachers, work well with one another and are mutually supportive. They take on responsibilities willingly, showing considerable maturity in fulfilling their tasks.
Attendance	Attendance rates are well above the average for primary schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, and often very good in Years 5 and 6. Teaching is good in English and mathematics.

The staff plan and prepare their work thoroughly and most manage their classes skilfully, so that learning is an enjoyable experience. Relationships are very good, and all adults respect, value and encourage their pupils, ensuring that all are included. Teachers have high expectations that the pupils will behave well, try hard and take a pride in the appearance of their work. As a result the pupils make every effort to achieve well. Basic skills are effectively taught, which is why good progress is made in literacy and numeracy. There is also good attention to practical and applied skills, for example in science, design and technology and physical education lessons. Computer technology is very effectively used to support learning, and this is a strength of the school. Very strong subject knowledge is sometimes seen, as in ICT and art lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection, but occasionally teachers' organisation and use of time and resources are not quite as effective as they might be, especially in the infant classes.

All pupils are usually challenged at the right level, with plenty to stretch the most capable pupils in most lessons. Those with special educational needs are well supported, enabling them to make the same good progress as their peers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good, with some areas of real strength. Extra-curricular provision is very good, especially games and sporting activities. Provision for ICT across the curriculum is first-rate. However, the religious education programme would benefit from further rationalisation.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good throughout the school. Provision is effectively organised and well targeted to support individual progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for the pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is excellent, and Fairhaven is recognised as a 'health promoting school'. The pupils learn to appreciate the important things in life and to respect cultural traditions. The visual and performing arts make a good contribution to their development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pupils are very well cared for. Their personal and academic development are tracked very effectively to support achievement.
Partnership with parents	This is one of Fairhaven's strengths. Senior staff are friendly and accessible and the information provided for parents is very good. Parents and friends support the work of the school, attending functions and helping in practical ways.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy head provide Fairhaven with very good leadership and management. Other staff are also highly effective in leading their own areas of responsibility. This is a strong team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are perceptive and know the school well. They work hard and fulfil all their responsibilities conscientiously.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring of standards and teaching by senior staff, subject co-ordinators and governors is very good. Highly effective systems are in place to track pupils' progress.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Senior staff and governors are enterprising in bidding for funding, plan effectively with an eye to future development and adhere to the principles of best value in spending on resources and services. The use of computer technology to support management and pupils' learning is excellent.
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	Fairhaven has a stable, experienced staff and is well resourced, except that the main library needs a lot of improvement. The site and accommodation have been improved to a good standard, with further work planned.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good leadership and management. • The quality of teaching and the progress that their children make. • High standards of behaviour and opportunities for personal development. • The ease with which parents can communicate with the school. • That the children like school very much. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like to see the range of extra-curricular activities improved.

Inspectors fully agree with all of the parents' positive views. Inspectors judge that the range of extra-curricular activities is very good; it is not reasonable to expect more from a school of this size.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Fairhaven has performed well in national tests for seven and eleven-year-olds in recent years, but results have fluctuated according to the proportion of pupils with special educational needs in each year-group. In summer 2001, for example, there was a slightly weaker group of pupils in Year 6, resulting in lower test results. Despite such occasional 'blips', the general trend is one of sustained improvement. This is because the school is becoming increasingly skilled at tracking pupils' progress accurately and setting challenging targets. There is a stable staffing position, and good teaching throughout the school underpins Fairhaven's success.

Standards at eleven

2 Last year's Year 6 pupils performed very well in summer 2002, with test results in English, mathematics and science well above average in national comparisons and when compared with similar schools. Every pupil reached at least the expected level 4 in science and only two failed to reach this level in English and mathematics. Far more Fairhaven pupils reached the higher level 5 than would normally be expected: well over one third of the year-group in English, getting on for half in mathematics and almost two thirds in science. Girls did particularly well in the most recent English and science tests, but on average in the past three years boys have performed relatively better in mathematics and science. During the inspection there were no noticeable differences between the standards being reached by boys and girls.

3 Current standards at the age of eleven are well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English, with strengths in speaking and listening. This is broadly consistent with last year's test results, allowing for slight variation between different year-groups. As they approach the end of Year 6, the pupils engage in relatively sophisticated discussions, appreciate other viewpoints and weigh up opinions. The pupils read aloud expressively and enjoy a good range of children's literature. Their understanding of what they read is good, but they are far more accustomed to using computers for independent research than books. As a result many do not know how to find their way around the reference section of a library. The pupils write fluently and legibly in ink, their work showing a consistently high quality of handwriting and presentation. In mathematics lessons, the pupils have a quick recall of facts to help them solve number problems and explain their answers clearly using the correct terminology. They use number operations confidently and have a secure understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages. Scientific knowledge is strong, and the pupils carry out tests and record their results accurately, making good use of graphs and tables.

4 Older pupils make highly effective use of ICT to support their work right across the curriculum, demonstrating a level of skill that is well above average for the age-group. Standards are above average in physical education, especially in team games and sporting activities. The pupils create vibrant paintings and have a good understanding of the process of designing, making and evaluating a product. They perform with confidence and aplomb in music and drama sessions. In history, geography and religious education standards are broadly average for the age-group. Although attainment is satisfactory, more could be achieved in religious education with a better focused curriculum.

Standards at seven

5 In the 2002 national assessments for seven-year-olds, pupils now in Year 3 scored above the national average in reading and well above in writing. Mathematics scores were very high – in the top five per cent nationally - with almost two-thirds of the pupils reaching the higher level 3. Teacher assessments in science also showed a high proportion reaching level 3. Overall these results compare very favourably with those of similar schools. There was a gap between the reading scores of boys and girls, but this was not as great as in other schools. However, boys did better than girls in mathematics; this has been quite a marked trend in recent years.

6 Current standards at the end of the infant stage are similar to those indicated by recent national assessments, being above average in reading, writing and science, and well above average in mathematics. Pupils in Year 2 speak confidently for their age and are reading with growing assurance and good understanding. Handwriting is already joined, and many write clearly and fluently. The pupils are beginning to produce interesting stories, with some adventurous vocabulary used by the most capable. In their mathematics lessons the pupils are working comfortably with numbers to 100, counting in twos, fives and tens, creating and interpreting simple graphs. Their work in science shows a good knowledge of health-related topics, and the ability to carry out tests and record findings accurately in tabular or graphic form. The pupils use ICT to support all their work. They write directly onto the computer screen, format their own text, create designs, record information and programme the 'roamer' with skill and confidence. Standards in art and physical education are also better than average, whilst standards in geography, history and religious education are as would be expected for this age-group. Because of the structure of the timetable it was not possible to evaluate standards in music during this inspection. Assembly singing is good.

Achievement in the reception year and beyond

7 Assessments when the children start school show a wide range of ability and maturity, but these are broadly average taken as a whole. The children progress well in the reception classes and by the time they move into Year 1 most have comfortably achieved the national goals for their age-group in each area of learning. Attainment is above average in the children's personal, social and emotional development, mathematics and physical development.

8 The pupils make good progress at the infant stage and in Years 3 and 4, but achievement accelerates in Years 5 and 6 and is very good overall at the junior stage. The pupils make particular strides in speaking and listening, mathematics, science and ICT. This is the result of strong teaching, a well-structured curriculum and good support for the pupils who need it, combined with the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. The school tracks carefully the progress of all its pupils and teachers ensure that they provide interesting and stimulating tasks at the right level of challenge for all. There are only two pupils who speak English as an additional language, both of whom have a very secure command of the language. They are doing well and achieving standards that reflect their abilities.

9 Pupils benefit from the school's positive policy of including those with special educational needs in all activities and the achievement of these pupils is similar to that of the others. They receive good levels of support in small literacy groups and satisfactory support in class lessons, enabling them to make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans. They attain standards that reflect well their levels of ability.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10 Pupils' attitudes, values, personal development and attendance are very good. High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection, with some further improvement. Parents are extremely pleased with their children's personal development.

11 Pupils' attitudes generally and their sensible and considerate behaviour contribute very much to the quality of learning and life in the school and to their academic and personal development. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and enjoy all of their learning and recreational experiences. They value their teachers and are right to say that their teachers are friendly and helpful. They particularly like the talent shows and the many visits, for example to a technology and outdoors adventure centre. Pupils in the junior classes are very proud of being given responsibilities such as looking after younger pupils. They participate energetically in the various activities, all of which are fully subscribed to. Pupils are very positive about their studies. They work conscientiously and try to do their best. They are open, confident and co-operative with adults and their peers.

12 Behaviour in lessons and about the school is almost always very good. Pupils are courteous and polite and conduct themselves in an orderly manner. Incidents of anti-social behaviour are rare and bullying virtually non-existent. The school has never excluded a pupil. In the very few lessons where behaviour is only satisfactory, it is because there is insufficient support for the pupils who need it and some pupils are not sufficiently independent to work without supervision or guidance.

13 Relationships between pupils are very good. They work very well together and are mutually supportive. They listen with interest to the contributions of others and are quick to applaud them. They work and play very well as team members, are happy to take their turn and adopt a suitably competitive attitude when appropriate. Relationships are strong between all pupils regardless of gender, age, heritage and ability.

14 Pupils make good progress in becoming mature and responsible. They develop very good awareness of moral and social issues and demonstrate appropriate regard for the faiths and lifestyles of others. They respect property and the views and opinions of others, understanding that all have a right to their own views. When given the opportunity to use their initiative pupils respond well. They are, however, given too few opportunities to make choices, particularly in the reception and infant classes, where they are sometimes too dependent on their teachers. Pupils take on responsibilities with enthusiasm and pride. Older pupils undertake house captaincy very competently and many look after and help younger pupils. At present they lack opportunities to take on formal responsibilities through a school council, but this issue is under active consideration. Pupils develop a strong awareness of the environment, local and wider community and the lifestyles of others through visits and visitors and charitable support. An excellent example of pupils' attitudes and sense of community is the eagerness with which many pupils help at a nearby special unit for pre-school children, who have a variety of special needs.

15 Attendance is very good because pupils want to go to school and parents are very confident that their children will do well at school. Therefore, attendance rates are well above the average for primary schools. Pupils arrive in good time for the start of school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16 Teaching and learning are generally good throughout the school, and often very good in Years 5 and 6. During the inspection more than three-quarters of the teaching seen was good or better, and getting on for one lesson in every five was very good or excellent.

There was no unsatisfactory teaching. There are close parallels with findings at the time of the last inspection. This time, teaching was slightly better in the reception and junior classes than in the infants, but this was largely because of a temporary staffing difficulty. Throughout the school, teaching shows thoroughly secure subject knowledge, with particularly high levels of expertise observed in some mathematics, art, ICT and physical education lessons. Class management and organisation are highly competent and, in many lessons, there is much to interest and challenge the pupils.

17 Basic skills are systematically taught, with good teaching overall in both English and mathematics. The development of handwriting provides an example of how the school achieves high standards. In reception, very close attention is paid to correct letter formation and to the children's ability to manipulate writing implements with good control. Handwriting continues to be taught systematically throughout the infant stage, with joined script introduced by Year 2. In the juniors the systematic approach continues and there is an expectation, often unspoken, that work in all subjects will be carefully set out and presented to a high standard. The pupils respond to this and take pride in the appearance and accuracy of their work, for example in mathematics. By Year 6 they write fluently and legibly in ink as a matter of course, even when working fast against a time target. Other practical and applied skills are taught with equal care. During the inspection, for example, one science lesson was specifically designed to improve the accuracy of the pupils' measurement of capacity. In subjects across the curriculum, teachers' planning generally ensures the development of skills in both literacy and numeracy. Just occasionally there are missed opportunities, for example some over-reliance on worksheets in geography in the lower junior years.

18 All teachers plan and prepare their work very thoroughly. Especially in English and mathematics, they regularly review the pupils' work and adjust the teaching programme accordingly, for example to reinforce a concept that has proved more difficult than anticipated. Reasoning and understanding are checked effectively at every stage by getting the pupils to explain their thinking and justify their views. Very good examples were seen in mathematics lessons with the older pupils. Here there were highly effective interventions to maintain the progress made as soon as there was any sign that a pupil was beginning to struggle. Good use was made of the time at the end of each lesson to pull together all the strands and to prepare for the next session. Teachers assess the pupils' work effectively, enabling them to match tasks to individual needs, but this does not always come through in their marking. There are some examples of very good marking, for example in some science books, where pupils have been encouraged to think carefully about their ideas and understanding. Marking is invariably up-to-date and makes positive remarks, but does not always make it clear how the pupil could improve further.

19 Because teachers know their pupils' capabilities very well, there is a good level of challenge for all, including the high fliers. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is also of good quality, both in class situations and when they are withdrawn in small groups for literacy. Teachers are fully involved in the writing of well conceived individual education plans. These are discussed with pupils who sign an agreement that they will try to achieve their targets. Lesson plans often indicate separate tasks suitable for these pupils which boost their confidence and ensure that they are fully involved in the activities. In the small literacy groups, teachers work closely with class teachers. Lessons usually follow the same topic as in the main class but at a less demanding level so that pupils understand and the difference in attainment does not grow too wide. Teachers ensure that pupils have a variety of appropriate tasks that keep them interested, and praise is used well to reward effort.

20 Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, an important strength throughout the school. Adults respect, value and encourage those in their class or group, ensuring that all are included in learning. In an excellent art lesson, for example, the teacher supported each pupil in turn, with well judged and constructive criticism and appreciation of their efforts. Another teacher was highly successful in promoting enthusiasm, involvement and enjoyment of music-making. Both teachers were getting the very best from the pupils as a result of the positive and friendly climate for learning in their classrooms. Teachers throughout the school almost invariably manage the pupils' behaviour very effectively. Those working with children in the reception and infant age-groups set high standards and work hard to ensure that they observe classroom conventions. Very occasionally there is a need to be slightly firmer with pupils in the junior age-range, but learning is hardly ever impeded by inappropriate behaviour.

21 The pupils' personal, social and health education is very effectively integrated in many lessons. In Year 2, for example, the pupils worked in small groups to agree on a healthy menu from a number of possibilities, whilst in Year 6 the pupils discussed substance abuse as part of their work on non-chronological writing.

22 Teachers make good use of resources for learning, with an outstanding use of computer technology for a wide range of purposes throughout the school. The use of ICT to reinforce learning and provide practice in basic skills is well established in most areas of the curriculum and in each age-group. Highly effective use is made of computers to record and analyse data from the reception class upwards. The use of the Internet for research purposes is a well established aspect of school life, and the school celebrates pupils' work on its website. The digital camera is used very effectively to support work in art and to create a record of school activities and visits. Teachers are now developing new skills, such as presentation using PowerPoint, to very good effect.

23 Teachers have fewer opportunities to work with classroom support staff than in many schools, but during the inspection nursery nurses were making a useful contribution to learning in the reception class. Teaching and learning in ICT are effectively supported by a member of the non-teaching staff.

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

24 The quality of learning opportunities provided throughout the school is good overall and there are several areas of particular strength. The curriculum is planned to provide a good balance of time for different subjects. Although literacy and numeracy dominate timetables, this is not to the extent that there is too little time for other subjects. For instance, in physical education junior pupils have three sessions per week, which is more than in many other schools. The religious education scheme, though meeting statutory requirements, needs to be rationalised and is currently under review. Since the introduction of a class containing mixed age-groups (Year 1/2), the infant curriculum has been adjusted, on the whole successfully. There is a need for further fine-tuning, however, to ensure the steady development of skills in subjects such as history.

25 The time spent on teaching and learning in both the infants and juniors is close to that recommended for these key stages. Generally time is used very well, so that in the juniors there are three teaching periods in the morning, providing flexibility and diversity to studies before lunch. In the infants there is one teaching period that lasts for one and a half hours. This is officially given over to literacy or numeracy, but in both cases this is too long. In practice, teachers use part of the time for other subjects or activities, but this is not formally planned in order to give staff some flexibility. The teaching of numeracy skills is well

developed across the curriculum and literacy is also well supported in some subject areas, especially personal, social and health education (PSHE). There is, however, scope for strengthening the development of literacy in geography, history and religious education. ICT is used very effectively to support many subjects and makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. The school is seeking formal recognition for its provision in physical education and art and design respectively by applying for the Sportsmark and Artmark awards.

26 The provision for PHSE is excellent. Special time is set aside in all classes each week, forty-five minutes in the infants and an hour in the juniors. This time is carefully used as part of a detailed approach to pupils' development that touches on a wide range of areas including citizenship. Pupils' health studies are enriched through the school's involvement in a project linked with Exeter University. Information gathered by the school is analysed by the university to provide information for further work on healthy lifestyles. The school already has the status of 'health-promoting school' and pupils record their intake of fruit as part of a healthy diet. Hygiene and studies in human development, sex education and drug misuse are covered in some depth, sometimes using the services of outside speakers such as the school nurse. In literacy pupils consider the effects of alcohol, discussing the positive and negative effects it has on people.

27 The curriculum is strongest in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) where teachers routinely plan tasks to challenge pupils of different abilities appropriately. In other subjects, where tasks are sometimes the same for all pupils, teachers ensure that they give extra support to slower learners, and often have an extension task prepared to challenge those of high ability. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum, and are included in extra-curricular activities. Individual education plans are written by the special needs co-ordinator and the class teacher, with targets that are well focused, clear and achievable.

28 The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities that involve most staff. Many are sports-related activities, which are taken up by pupils from Year 3 onwards. The proportion of junior pupils who take advantage of extra-curricular activities is very high and opportunities to take part in competitive sport, both between houses in school and with other schools, are plentiful. Fairhaven's commitment to sport plays a part in the personal development of the pupils and their overall health and fitness. Two residential trips for pupils in the juniors and a wide range of other visits help to enrich the curriculum for all.

29 The school has good links with secondary schools. Teachers from local schools have visited Fairhaven to learn more about the national initiatives in literacy and numeracy and others have visited to provide specialist teaching in science. Sporting links with other schools are very good. The school building is used by the local community for a number of out-of-school activities such as Brownies and adult keep fit classes, and a mobile classroom provides a base for a fee-paying pre-school provision used by many families. The school hall is used for a popular parent and toddler group once a week. The local Greek Cypriot organisation uses the school on Thursday nights to share its culture and language with expatriots who live in the Midlands.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

30 Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school operates as a caring community and aims to create an atmosphere of encouragement, acceptance of the individual, respect for achievement and sensitivity to individual need. The school is very effective in fulfilling these aims.

31 Pupils' spiritual development is promoted through the school's ethos, which is evident in its assemblies and connections with the local church. Assemblies, together with the multi-faith curriculum, enable pupils to gain insights into values and beliefs of the principal faiths and provide opportunities 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, the rector of the parish church, who is also the chair of governors, led an assembly for pupils in the reception and Years 1 and 2. He effectively captured the pupils' attention as he told the story of the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand', focusing on the miracle that Jesus had performed. At the end of the story pupils were provided with an opportunity to reflect on the story and to join in prayer. In their class work pupils are encouraged to reflect on the beauty of nature and the world around them. For example, in a lesson in Year 6 the teacher used a book that the class was studying as a way to encourage pupils to discuss their experiences of beauty around them. In the story, a boy from a prisoner of war camp began to discover beauty for himself. After reading the story, pupils discussed their experiences of beauty in rainbows, waterfalls and in views they had seen from hillsides.

32 The school promotes a clear understanding of right and wrong and pupils know how to behave. The schools' programme for pupils' PHSE encourages pupils to respect qualities of politeness, perseverance and patience. From the earliest days in the reception class, children are encouraged to consider how their actions affect others. Values are fostered through the caring, supportive and very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils and the good example set by all those working in the school. Pupils feel safe and confident and openly share quite intimate details about themselves. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 confided the baby names they had for their dummies and these confidences were well respected by the other pupils. Assemblies give strong support to the teaching of the principles that distinguish right from wrong, fostering such values as respect for one another and there is a strong sense of care for others permeating the school. Pupils show courtesy to adults and speak politely with visitors.

33 The school provides a very wide range of opportunities for pupils 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 the school, in the local community and throughout the world. In most lessons, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to co-operate and to work without support. Care is taken to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school. Pupils new to the school are helped by others to settle quickly into daily routines and to make new friends. Many undertake monitorial duties in their classrooms and older pupils have specific responsibilities for organising a range of activities, for example inter-house sports and games. Social development is further enhanced through participation in a wide range of sports, trips to places of interest and a variety of outings, including residential visits for pupils in Years 3 to 6.

34 Pupils in Year 6 work with a local independent charity that aims to help young children who have a range of special needs. Pupils visit the centre to work with the children, and individuals and groups have organised cake and souvenir sales to raise money. This work is contributing immensely to the pupils' social development. Following the Harvest Festival service in the local church, pupils in Year 6 deliver parcels to senior citizens in the locality. The school receives many 'thank-you letters' from the recipients of these parcels that also note the good manners of the pupils who deliver them. Through their lessons, pupils are beginning to understand that peoples in other parts of the world do not have the same advantages as themselves.

35 Pupils are given a variety of opportunities to develop an appreciation of their own and other cultural traditions in a number of curriculum areas. Work on world religions in religious education lessons and their study of ancient Greece and Egypt, extends pupils' understanding of cultures both past and present. There are some good examples of pupils studying not only religious beliefs and practices but also the styles of clothes, and patterns associated with that religion. For example, pupils have studied and created Islamic patterns. In Year 6 they designed and made head-dresses to use in a dramatic performance of the Hindu story of Rama and Sita. Pupils' work in geography lessons effectively promotes their understanding of the wide diversity of cultures to be found in countries across the world, including Mali, Pakistan and India. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of music and musicians in lessons and through extra-curricular activities, including instrument tuition. Pupils study the work of artists such as Pablo Picasso, David Hockney and Paul Klee, and consider examples of art from other peoples, for example Australian aborigines. Pupils' understanding of their local culture is extended through visits to a glass-making museum, Dudley Castle and the Black Country Museum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36 Pastoral care is very good. Arrangements to ensure pupils' general health, safety and welfare are good, whilst procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development are very good overall. The high standards reported at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained and improvements have been introduced relating to academic assessment. Parents are right to be very pleased with the quality of care and support that are provided.

37 Relationships between all adults in the school and pupils are constructive, caring and mutually respectful. Teachers create an environment that is conducive to learning and that promotes a sense of security. Pupils feel valued and supported and are confident to trust their teachers and to ask for assistance when they need it. Supervision at break times is very good. Child protection procedures are in place but, whilst teachers are well aware of their responsibilities, some non-teaching members of staff have not recently been reminded about appropriate courses of action. Health and safety procedures are competently managed and first aid arrangements are satisfactory. The school has a robust policy to ensure safe use of the Internet. A school nurse and other specialist agencies provide additional services to the school. Good health is very positively and practically promoted. Recent measures to make available filtered water for each child throughout the day and to offer a piece of fresh fruit daily have been very well received and are contributing to pupils' well-being in a practical way.

38 The needs of individual pupils with special educational needs are dealt with sensitively and appropriately. There are high levels of support among teachers and also other pupils. Advice is sought from outside agencies when appropriate. The school closely monitors the progress of all pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and this pinpoints where they need extra help which has a positive impact on their progress.

39 Attendance registers are accurately completed and the school successfully engages the co-operation of parents to account for absence. Parents confirm that their children enjoy school so much that they want to be there and in good time. The school has no further need, therefore, to specifically promote regular attendance.

40 Although a system of recognition and reward is in place and effectively motivates the pupils, the school employs the very best way of promoting good behaviour which is by providing good quality teaching and activities that are stimulating. Pupils enjoy their lessons

and are thoroughly engaged in their work. In the very few lessons where pupils' attitudes towards their studies and their behaviour are only satisfactory, it is because there is not enough support for the pupils who need it and they have not developed sufficient independence to work effectively without supervision or guidance. In the few instances where pupils have difficulties exercising self-control, the school employs effective strategies to help them, usually with the ready co-operation of parents. Very good recreational facilities in the playground contribute to the high standards of behaviour at lunchtime.

41 Key aspects of pupils' personal development are not formally assessed and recorded, but teachers know the pupils well, enabling them to provide good information for parents about pupils' personal characteristics and how they participate in school. Pupils do not contribute to their annual school reports as they might, for example by reviewing and evaluating their personal progress or setting their own targets.

42 Procedures for assessing and recording the pupils' academic progress are now very good, and this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The high quality of assessment ensures that teachers are well aware of the different levels of attainment of their pupils, and planning is aimed to help each group appropriately. The results of formal assessments and tests are used very effectively in the juniors to target additional support where it is most needed.

43 When children start school there is a thorough analysis of the results of baseline assessment and detailed individual records are maintained in the reception year to monitor individual progress. These are effectively used to inform planning. In the infant and junior classes, procedures for assessing pupils' levels of achievement and checking their progress in English, mathematics and science are very good. In English and mathematics pupils' progress is systematically recorded against 'key objective' statements using a class spreadsheet. In each subject, attainment is tracked systematically by teachers using computer technology, so that standards and rates of progress can be seen at a glance. Teachers record individual attainment against National Curriculum criteria on a termly basis, giving a clear picture. As well as the national statutory tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, optional tests are used in the junior years to monitor achievement in English and mathematics. Results are analysed for areas of weakness and action is then taken to improve pupils' understanding. These results provide a useful basis for predicting future test results, which are regularly updated as pupils move through the school.

44 The information gained from assessment is used very effectively when staff plan the teaching programme. Teachers evaluate their lessons in literacy and numeracy and adapt their weekly or daily planning according to the level of their pupils' understanding. Teachers use questions and quick tests effectively to assess pupils' comprehension. They mark work conscientiously and often comment on what pupils need to do next in order to improve their learning. Although good individual targets are set for pupils with special educational needs, this approach has not yet been developed for all pupils in English and mathematics. This would be a worthwhile development. In many subjects samples of pupils' work are maintained as a point of reference.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45 Parents hold very positive views about the school and express great confidence in it. The partnership between school and parents is very good. These very good standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

46 Parents are right to be pleased with the quality of education and care that the school provides. They are also very pleased with the academic and personal standards that their

children achieve. Almost all confirm that their children greatly enjoy going to school and contact with teachers is welcomed and easy. They appreciate the various improvements that have recently been put in place. Parents are confident that the school will enable their children to achieve the aspirations that they have for them and, consequently, they ensure that pupils' attendance is high.

47 The school keeps parents well informed by newsletters, e-mail communications, the school website and notice board. Pupils' annual school reports include very good information about what pupils know, understand and can do. They describe their strengths and weaknesses and recommend how they could improve, but few explain clearly and consistently how pupils achieve in relation to expectations for their age-group, except in Years 2 and 6. Reports provide an opportunity for parents to respond, but not for self-review by the pupil. Almost all parents attend the termly opportunities to discuss pupils' progress. The 'school book' is used well for two-way communication between teachers and parents. Parents of pupils who have special education needs are appropriately involved in the assessment and review process.

48 Parents support their children very well with their work at home. They, with other relatives and local residents, turn out in large numbers when pupils take part in concerts and festival celebrations. A large number of parents, far more than in most primary schools, help in school on a regular basis. However, parents' attendance at curriculum information evenings is not good, and the school has difficulty in recruiting parents as governors. A home and school association is very active. It organises many social events and raises considerable sums to assist the school. Its most recent initiative funded the purchase of outdoor adventure equipment for the pupils. The school consults informally with members of the association in order to obtain parental views about school matters. Relationships between school and parents are strong, resulting in very good co-operation, for example giving reasons for absence and agreeing support strategies for children who need it.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49 Leadership and management are both very good, as at the time of the last inspection. The life and work of the school is based on high standards, a commitment to educational inclusion and a clear set of values shared by staff and governors. This is recognised by the pupils and by most parents, giving them a high degree of confidence in the school.

50 The headteacher is highly experienced and provides quiet but authoritative leadership, working closely with a very capable deputy head. All staff give a good professional lead in their individual areas of responsibility, and there is particularly effective leadership of literacy, numeracy, art, physical education and PSHE. Leadership in the area of ICT is exceptional. The leadership and management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The special needs co-ordinator performs her role effectively and ensures that all pupils with special educational needs receive the support they need. She has good relations with teachers and works closely with professional colleagues from specialist services.

51 Relationships are very good. Fairhaven has a stable staff, who support one another and work together for common purposes as an effective team. In the absence of two key teachers during the inspection, for example, colleagues took on extra responsibilities competently, with a minimum of fuss. Teachers show commitment to the pupils both in their everyday work and, in many cases, by giving personal time to extra-curricular activities and residential trips. Non-teaching staff, including classroom support staff, the school secretary and the caretaker also show a real concern for the school and its pupils.

52 Despite cramped office accommodation, school management is very competent, with strengths in the management of information and in communication. Highly effective use is made of computer technology to support school administration and pupils' learning. The present computerised system of record-keeping has been put in place thoughtfully since the last inspection, and is well designed to serve the intended purpose without wasting time. Test results are carefully analysed to identify trends and areas for further improvement, and effective systems are in place to track the progress of individual pupils. Senior staff and subject co-ordinators are fully involved in monitoring standards and classroom practice in their own areas of responsibility when their subject comes round as a high priority. Written reviews are thorough and perceptive: a good example is the recent evaluation of provision for PSHE at Fairhaven. The level of analysis and quality of review here show how effectively staff are working together to ensure continued improvement.

53 The governing body is very effectively led and well organised, with work shared equitably between a small number of committees. Governors have an intelligent understanding of their role; they are well-informed and know the school well. The chair of governors, for example, spent two full days in observing the work of the school when he took over his present role about two years ago, and remains a very regular visitor. Individual governors take on responsibility for liaison with subject co-ordinators and are systematically involved in the cycle of subject review. The resulting short reports contain useful insights. Governors keep up-to-date with educational developments and attend relevant training, for example to inform themselves about new legislation in the field of special educational needs and disability. They fulfil all statutory duties, including new obligations such as adopting a race equality policy. Governors are appropriately involved in constructing the school development plan and have a clear grasp of the future direction of the school, including external factors that could influence events. Major issues, such as the recent decision to establish an infant class with mixed year-groups, are fully and thoughtfully debated.

54 The school development plan has some strengths and shows improvement since the last inspection, when there were too many areas for development. The current plan contains a review of the previous year, lists appropriate targets and priority areas for development and includes some useful forward thinking. There is a well-established rolling programme for review of each area of the curriculum; this is systematic, but does not include the Foundation Stage as it should. The programme for building and refurbishment is well mapped out and clearly linked to financial planning. The format of the plan would repay critical attention, however. Developments are not always prioritised and there are no clear action plans explaining what outcomes are intended when. This makes success difficult to quantify. The separate ICT development plan is very clearly set out.

55 Arrangements for performance management have been implemented very effectively. The school has a well-established system for appraisal and staff development and staff are used to an open process. All, including the headteacher, share their targets with one another, and these link with whole-school priorities in the development plan.

56 Financial management is very secure, with appropriate checks and balances in place. Governors, especially the chair of finance, are well informed and have a clear grasp of the current budgetary position. Specific grants such as the standards fund are invariably used for the intended purpose. The school adds to its small special needs grant considerable sums from the devolved budget to ensure that these pupils are properly catered for. Considerable enterprise has been shown in bidding for additional funds of all kinds, for example to develop first-rate play facilities on the site. Senior staff and governors are well aware of the principles of 'best value', which they adhere to in all their spending. They have shown flexibility in considering a range of strategies when procuring services

such as cleaning, grounds maintenance and professional training and advice. ICT training programmes, for example, have been very effectively developed in-house.

57 Fairhaven is funded at a reasonably generous level. There is a good complement of teaching and classroom support staff, but clerical support hours are relatively low. Resources for learning are mainly good, with minor exceptions such as artefacts for religious education and large play equipment for the Foundation Stage. A major area for re-development is the main reference library, which has been relatively neglected as computerised sources of information have developed. Most fiction and information books are now in classrooms, and the function of the main library now needs to be thought through. The site and accommodation have been improved to a good standard, with further work planned. The next major project is a much-needed extension to the school's administrative accommodation.

58 Taking into account the current level of funding, the high standards achieved and the quality of provision, Fairhaven is judged to give good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59 There are no key issues for the school to address, but a few minor matters are identified in the report that would make provision still better. In particular, the following should be addressed:

Strengthen the curriculum further by

- continuing to fine-tune the curriculum at Key Stage 1, especially to ensure that skills in subjects such as history are developed at an appropriate level in the mixed Year 1/2 class;
- extending the development of literacy skills across the curriculum, especially in history, geography and religious education;
- developing the religious education curriculum and simplifying the scheme of work.

(See paragraphs 24, 25, 113, 124, 150 – 152).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	9	36	14	0	0	0
Percentage	2	15	60	23	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/a	215
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	29

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	5.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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	14	21	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	18	21	21
	Total	31	35	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (91)	100 (94)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	19	19	20
	Total	33	33	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (94)	94 (100)	97 (86)
	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	20	14	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	19	20
	Girls	13	13	14
	Total	31	32	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (79)	94 (75)	100 (92)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	16	18
	Girls	13	12	12
	Total	31	28	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (n/a)	82 (n/a)	88 (n/a)
	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	206	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	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)	11.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.5
Average class size	26.9

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	78

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Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	572,858
Total expenditure	571,298
Expenditure per pupil	2,214
Balance brought forward from previous year	12,246
Balance carried forward to next year	13,806

Recruitment of teachers

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	215
Number of questionnaires returned	66

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	35	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	41	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	55	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	64	8	0	0
The teaching is good.	59	39	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	56	8	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	24	0	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	36	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	59	3	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	65	35	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	42	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	33	11	0	21

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

60 Children are admitted to reception at the start of either the autumn or spring term, according to when their fifth birthday falls. At the time of the inspection there were only 14 children in the reception class, most of whom were still under five. With a well organised induction programme, all the children were happily settled. As the inspection took place early in the school year, direct evidence has been supplemented by work completed in reception by pupils now in Year 1.

61 Attainment on entry covers a broad spectrum, but is average overall. Many children have attended a pre-school setting and are ready to start school in terms of their social and emotional development, but a few are immature and find it very hard to concentrate. Taken as a whole, mathematical development is slightly above average at the start of the year, but the children have limited awareness of the printed word, sounds and rhymes. The children make good progress and, by the end of the year most comfortably reach national targets for their learning, the 'early learning goals'. Their attainment in personal, social and emotional development, mathematics and physical development is above average for the age-group. Some of the more mature children make rapid progress in all areas of learning. This is because teaching is consistently good and group sizes are favourable. Comprehensive records of the children's achievements are maintained, and planning takes good account of individual levels of development. There is a well structured approach to learning basic skills, effective use of talk to develop understanding and satisfactory provision for learning through first-hand experience and play.

Personal, social and emotional development

62 This area is effectively promoted by both teachers and classroom support staff, and the children make good progress, exceeding the expected level of development by the end of the year. The children respond very positively to new experiences and activities, for example thoroughly enjoying a demanding physical education lesson in the hall. There are very high expectations of the children's behaviour in terms of attending carefully and putting up hands rather than calling out, and this means that class lessons go at a brisk pace with little time wasted. When given the opportunity the children play imaginatively and independently, collaborating and sharing very well with one another. They are aware of one another's needs. For example one child tried to help another who was having problems with the computer, whilst several were seen to help others with buttons and fastenings. Board games are used very effectively to reinforce basic learning and show the children how to take turns, and work on the computer develops their independence. The children have relatively few opportunities to make choices as a planned part of their learning, however; this is an area for further development.

Communication, language and literacy

63 Teaching is generally good in this area of learning. Many of the children speak confidently and they use language fluently in their imaginative play, for example in creating dialogue with 'Village with Three Corners' puppets; on the other hand, attainment in early literacy skills is barely average at the start of the reception year. Most of the children now in reception enjoy books and stories, look with interest at the pictures and talk about the story. Apart from one or two brighter ones, however, they do not identify words and recognise only a few letters in the print. From the first, initial sounds and rhymes are well emphasised by staff. In one group session, for example, the teacher focused on objects starting with the

sound 'h'. The children's understanding was effectively reinforced and their interest sustained by a game using a collection of everyday objects. This was subsequently followed up by hand-writing practice, with both the teacher and the nursery nurse working hard and patiently to correct non-standard letter formation.

64 On the basis of last year's books, good progress is made in the children's writing and understanding of print, and attainment is well in line with the early learning goals. Almost all children were having a go at independent writing by the end of the reception year, with the most capable writing two or three sentences unaided. As early as January one child labelled her drawing independently 'Godylox gowing to the house of the bes'. Many were able to spell simple three-letter words correctly and were making a good attempt to spell less regular words such as 'isim' for 'ice-cream'. Reading records show steady progress. The reading scheme provides a thoroughly secure structure for learning the mechanics of reading, but teachers' planning suggests that it may be over-emphasised at the expense of a wider range of children's books.

65 Structured play is making a good contribution to the children's progress in language and literacy. Activities in 'Sammy Snake's Supermarket' involve shopping lists, notepads and paying at the till, as well as opportunities for dressing up and acting in role.

Mathematical development

66 Attainment is above average for the age-group by the end of the reception year. The children are well taught and make good progress. Last year's books show that some above average children made very rapid progress, especially in their understanding of number, by the end of the year. These children were completing number sentences such as $4 + ? = 10$ and counting confidently and reliably to 50 and beyond. Average children could read and write numerals to at least 30, add two to a given number and complete simple addition and subtraction problems. All the children were familiar with mathematical vocabulary to describe relative size, shape and measures, including terms such as 'cube' and 'cylinder'.

67 The teaching is thorough, but challenging. During the inspection, mathematical activities were well managed and pitched at just the right level for the children. They counted up to and down from 20, read and ordered numerals to 10 and used a number line to solve problems such as what number comes before 8 and after zero. The teacher was encouraging and aware of the lower attainers, enabling them to keep up with the rest. Group activities were well planned at different levels, with good use of games such as 'Bingo' to reinforce learning. During the inspection role-play in 'Sammy Snake's Supermarket' involved the use of 'money' for purchases, but there was otherwise limited use of structured play, for example with natural materials, to reinforce mathematical learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

68 Provision and teaching are good and the children's general knowledge is well extended in the course of the year, so that the targets in this area of learning are met by most at the end of their time in reception. Children's books from last year show a good range of activities. For example, they investigated and tested materials such as cling-film and paper towels to see how well they kept water out. The class created a record of the weather, using a chart on the computer, and observed what happens to vegetation when it rots down. The children were taught to predict, observe carefully and make simple records of their findings, using effectively designed worksheets.

69 Very effective use is made of computers to support the children's learning of basic skills such as phonics, counting and matching. The children are highly motivated by working

on the computers and they are keen to learn. In many cases basic keyboard and mouse skills are good, but children who are not familiar with computers at home find clicking and dragging difficult. The teacher is alert to these problems and quickly steps in to help when necessary.

70 The children have opportunities to cook most weeks, and were making 'honey scones' with the nursery nurse during the inspection. This session was well taught, with a good focus on developing the relevant vocabulary. Relationships were good and there was effective management of the activity, with good attention to hygiene and safety.

Physical development

71 The children do not have a separate outdoor play area, as is good practice for this age-group, but good general play facilities are available on a shared basis with Years 1 and 2 at break times. This is not ideal, but in compensation the pupils have regular hall sessions that provide opportunities for small groups to engage in independent climbing, balancing, jumping and activities with wheeled toys. With good teaching, the children work with thorough enjoyment. They confidently balance on ramps and beams, climb up steep ladders and nets and jump from heights of up to 50 cms, landing safely. For their regular formal hall lesson, the children change into appropriate clothing. They already understand terms such as 'warm-up' and respond to promptly to simple instructions. Their self-discipline is good, and the children make very good use of space, showing above average awareness of their bodies and a good level of skills. Expectations are high. For example, the children were asked to roll a ball slowly around themselves with their hands, then to move it between their legs in a figure of eight and finally to roll it slowly with their feet, without kicking. The children performed these tasks well, showing high levels of concentration for their ages.

72 When the children start school they have average control of writing implements and scissors. With regular practice, they make good progress in improving these skills so that, by the time of the inspection, almost all could hold a pencil correctly.

Creative development

73 Overall provision and teaching are good in this area of learning. The children make good progress and are well in line with the expected levels of attainment by the end of two or three terms in reception. The children have regular access to creative role-play, with a specially constructed enclosure in the classroom capable of changing from home corner to supermarket, as at present. Dressing up clothes and a mirror are available. During the inspection the children played in this area with evident enjoyment and absorption. They actively negotiated roles as staff members or customers, talking incessantly to one another as they acted their parts. There are regular opportunities for the children to draw, paint and model, and they produced colourful representational paintings during the inspection. The children show enjoyment of music, and sing enthusiastically, for example in assembly. In a small group session they listened carefully and copied short rhythmic phrases clapped by the teacher, then invented their own phrases for others to copy. Some children recalled the name of simple percussion instruments they had used before, which they sorted into sets of 'tapped' or 'shaken' instruments. Above average children were beginning to describe sounds imaginatively: 'it's like wind chimes'; 'like the rain falling'.

ENGLISH

74 Results in recent national tests have fluctuated depending on the abilities of different year groups, but there has been an overall trend of improving standards. In 2001 the school's results in national tests at the end of Year 6 were average, which compared

unfavourably with results from similar schools. The school expected this, because there were more pupils than usual with special educational needs. Results in summer 2002 showed a great improvement, and were well above the national average. The reasons for these good results include the quality of teaching throughout the school and the good support received by pupils with special educational needs. The very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language are fluent in the language and achieve at similar levels to their classmates. There is no discernible difference in the performance of girls and boys.

75 In the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 2, the school's results were above average for reading and well above average in writing. There were very few pupils who did not attain the minimum standard expected. Results from the 2002 tests are similar in reading, although a few more pupils did not achieve the minimum expected level. There has been a further improvement in writing. All pupils reached the expected standard and more than a quarter achieved the higher level 3.

76 Pupils' speaking and listening skills are above the national average by the end of Year 2 and continue to develop very well through the junior part of the school. By the end of Year 6 many pupils speak maturely at levels well above those found nationally. Pupils in Year 2 listen attentively, answer questions in complete and detailed sentences and enjoy describing what they see. For example, in a history lesson a pupil said of a doll, 'It *must* be old because all its clothes are knitted, and you wouldn't get that now.' By Year 6, pupils listen to different points of view with confidence and give a wide variety of answers. For example, in a combined literacy and PSHE lesson about drugs, they used appropriate vocabulary accurately as they explained that, although alcohol can be poisonous, it also can have a positive effect in moderation. The high level of both listening and speaking skills is the result of the interest and respect that teachers throughout the school have for their pupils, and the encouragement they give to those of all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs, to feel confident and valued.

77 Standards in reading are above average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. Most pupils enjoy reading and there are regular slots on timetables throughout the school for pupils to read books of their own choice. Basic reading skills are taught thoroughly but, at the bottom of the school, the restricted reading scheme gives pupils less opportunity than is found in many good schools to meet a wide variety of vocabulary. Before the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils read simple texts with accuracy and growing assurance. More able pupils read challenging texts with ease and excellent expression. They demonstrate very good understanding and say what they think may happen next. By the end of Year 6, very nearly all pupils read independently, fluently and with good expression from a range of texts. When asked, they explain what their book is about and why they chose it. The majority of pupils read complex text with good understanding in lessons, for example, 'Rastafarians use marijuana as part of their religious ceremony'. They understand and use skimming skills effectively. Pupils write regular book reviews which show perception as well as basic understanding. Most pupils are more accustomed to use computers for independent research than reference books. This is partly because their information and technology skills are very well developed, and partly because the library is small, under-resourced and under-used. Unfortunately this results in pupils throughout the school being unaware of the widely used Dewey System and therefore showing little knowledge of how to use the information section of a library.

78 Standards in writing are above the national average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. Throughout the school the standard of handwriting and the presentation of work are of outstanding quality. Pupils write in joined script by the end of Year 2 and this is an improvement since the last inspection. By the end of Year 2, the large majority of pupils

write clearly and fluently, and the more able pupils use a wide vocabulary and place inverted commas correctly. For example, last year pupils wrote vivid, detailed accounts of the Great Fire of London, some of which included 'eye-witness' comments. During the inspection, however, there was no evidence of independent or imaginative writing by pupils in the Year 1/2 class which was a pity as the more able Year 1 pupils had already demonstrated their ability to write independently in the reception class last year. Pupils in Year 6 write fluently and thoughtfully for a wide variety of purposes, and work done last year included some good descriptive and imaginative writing. Pupils in Year 5 have been studying poetry and some write with high levels of sensitivity. For example, while most pupils described a 'Lost Treasure' as an object, one pupil wrote,

*My life is in ruins as you are not here
I miss the way you loved me, I wish you were still here.
My treasure isn't a necklace, a ring, a book or a jewel
My treasure is a person with a special place in my heart.*

79 Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are taught literacy in small groups by knowledgeable and experienced adults. This enables them to learn at the levels appropriate for them and they therefore maintain high interest and make the same good progress as the rest of their class, although at lower levels. For example, a group of pupils in Year 4, like the rest of their class, were working with similes and a pupil showed a good sense of rhyme by suggesting, 'as bright as a light'.

80 Literacy skills are often developed well in subjects such as science and ICT, but there is scope for them to be used more imaginatively throughout the school in history, geography and religious education. Particularly in geography, there is a dependence on worksheets which stultifies the development of pupils' literacy skills. Drama plays an important part in developing pupils' feelings and understanding of issues in their PHSE. Annual productions at Christmas involve the whole school and are reported to be of very high quality.

81 During the inspection teaching was satisfactory in the infant classes with some good features. Evidence indicates that it is usually good in Year 2 but affected to some degree by a temporary staffing difficulty. The quality of teaching is good through the juniors which enables pupils to achieve consistently well, and the aspects of very good teaching in Years 5 and 6 ensure that pupils are enthused and often make very good progress. The main strengths include the good subject knowledge and high expectations that teachers have. These result in pupils maintaining good levels of interest. For example, pupils in Year 6 have learned about the Greek derivation of some words and were intrigued to recognise 'chronos' when talking about non-chronological reports. Teachers manage their classes consistently well which maintains an atmosphere conducive to learning. Teachers assess their pupils accurately and provide appropriate tasks which keep pupils well challenged at levels which also maintain their confidence.

82 The subject is led very well by an enthusiastic and extremely experienced co-ordinator. He has monitored teaching throughout the school and regularly sees both teachers' plans and samples of pupils' work. He is alert to new developments and introduces those which suit the school's circumstances; for example, teachers are beginning to use ideas from 'Literacy Matters'. Assessment is detailed and thorough, and is used well to ensure that pupils move forward steadily in their learning. Resources are generally good, although some fiction books show signs of being very well used. The library, however, which is housed in an unsuitably small space, is underdeveloped and is not used effectively. Instead, teachers encourage the use of the Internet or provide appropriate reference books in classrooms.

MATHEMATICS

83 The results of the 2002 national tests for seven-year-olds were well above the national average and very high (in the top five per cent) when compared with similar schools. High standards have been maintained for the past four years, with boys tending to perform slightly better than girls. The finding of the current inspection is that the attainment of pupils in the present Year 2 class is well above average. Close examination of previous work indicates that most pupils are making good progress in their learning and are achieving well. Standards of attainment are higher than those recorded at the time of the last inspection.

84 The results of the 2002 national tests for 11-year-olds were well above the national average and also well above average when compared with similar schools. This group of pupils made very good progress since taking the national tests when they were in Year 2. Standards fell in 2001 as a result of a lower attaining group of pupils, but levels of attainment have now returned to the high standards that were recorded in the previous two years. Taking the results of the last three years into account, pupils' performance in mathematics has significantly exceeded the national average for their age group. The pupils are making very good progress in their learning and are achieving well. Standards of attainment are currently well above average and higher than those recorded during the last inspection.

85 In lessons, pupils early in Year 2 mentally add and subtract single-digit numbers to 10 and calculate missing numbers in a sequence. Most average-attaining pupils calculate money sums up to 20 pence and higher, sometimes using their fingers to help them. More able pupils achieve this task mentally. Most pupils solve money problems well. They calculate the total cost of different items and the change that needs to be given. A close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that they count accurately in twos, fives and tens and understand the value of numbers up to 100. Higher-attaining pupils confidently add and subtract two-digit numbers, but some average and lower-attaining pupils find this difficult. Pupils use non-standards units to measure and interpret information on a graph. They know the names and properties of some geometric shapes and identify shapes that have line symmetry.

86 In lessons, most pupils in the Year 6 class use secure mental recall of multiplication facts in solving number problems. They multiply and add two two-digit numbers mentally and many average and higher-attaining pupils understand the value of decimals, and whole numbers up to one million. Pupils use a range of methods to help them to solve problems explaining clearly how they came to their answers. Average and higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes, and describe them using the correct mathematical language. A small number of higher-attaining pupils calculate the size of the interior angle of two-dimensional shapes. Lower-attaining pupils name most geometric shape correctly and identify some of their properties. A close examination of pupils' previous work indicates that most pupils confidently use the four number operations and have a clear understanding of the value of percentages, decimals and fractions. Lower-attaining pupils find this work difficult. Higher-attaining pupils confidently multiply decimals and use a range of strategies to check the accuracy of their answers. Most pupils calculate the perimeter and areas of shapes and accurately measure the size of angles using a protractor. Pupils understand the principles of probability and use straight-line graphs to convert pounds into euros.

87 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is particularly good in Years 5 and 6 and pupils often learn very

well in these classes. At the beginning of each lesson 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 in the Year 6 class for example, the teacher began with a well-paced mental session that engaged the pupils in their learning and promoted their mental skills. The teacher effectively questioned the pupils, challenging them to explain how they had calculated their answers. He checked the progress the pupils were making during the lesson and supported their learning very well. During the lesson the teacher set time targets to encourage the pupils to work hard. In response, the pupils concentrated well and worked at a good pace, displaying very positive attitudes to their work. A number of pupils who found the work challenging, persevered well and worked hard to overcome their difficulties. As a result of clear explanations, and very good support the pupils made very good progress in their learning.

88 In lessons, teachers manage the pupils well, achieving high standards of behaviour and positive attitudes. Close examination of pupils' previous work shows that they take great pride in the presentation and accuracy of their work. Teachers are effective in promoting mathematical vocabulary and encourage their pupils to explain their work using the correct terminology. 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 it is not used sufficiently well to assess what pupils understand or have learned. During some lessons teachers do not rigorously check the progress that pupils are making and as a result they do not learn as well as they might. The quality of teachers' marking is satisfactory. All work is marked up to date, but, although comments are supportive, they rarely provide pointers for further improvement.

89 Support staff are often deployed well and used effectively to help pupils learn. In a lesson in Year 4 for example, the support staff clearly understood what the pupils in their groups were expected to learn and were effective in helping them to achieve this. Many teachers make at least good and sometimes very good use of technology to engage and maintain pupils' interest in their learning. A particularly good example is the way in which 'PowerPoint' presentations are used in Years 5 and 6. In these lessons pupils operate the computer thereby allowing the teacher to focus on teaching the pupils. In each of the lessons seen, the teacher used the presentation well to create interest and enthusiasm among the pupils and maintain good pace to the lesson.

90 The curriculum is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. 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. Teachers often provide good opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in subjects such as science, art, geography and history. There are particularly good examples of pupils measuring and recording the results of science experiments on charts and graphs. In Year 3 for example, pupils recorded on a block graph the number of paper clips that could be picked up by different types of magnet, and in Year 6 pupils recorded on a line graph the decline in water temperature as they investigated the effectiveness of different insulators. Timelines are used frequently throughout the school and older pupils create beautiful designs using number patterns for example, triangular numbers. Computer programs are used well to support pupils' learning in this subject. During the inspection, pupils were often to be seen using computers to develop their mental skills.

91 Procedures for assessing pupils' levels of achievement and checking their progress are very good. Teachers record pupils' progress against 'key objective' statements for the elements of mathematics covered. In the best classes teachers use these records well to guide them in the provision of appropriate work for all pupils. 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 very well in these years to target additional support. The subject is very well led. The subject co-ordinator monitors the quality of planning and teaching and checks the standards that pupils achieve. He is very knowledgeable and, as a result of undertaking a detailed review of the subject, has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and where improvements need to be made. The school has a good number of resources that are well used.

SCIENCE

92 The results of national tests taken in 2002 indicate that attainment in science is well above average in the juniors, when compared to schools nationally and in comparison with schools that are similar to Fairhaven. Current standards are equally high and the Year 6 pupils are likely to obtain similar test results in 2003. Teachers' assessments undertaken in summer 2002 show that standards are above average in the infants. This is consistent with the work observed during the inspection.

93 In the infants pupils test their sense of taste by sampling different flavours of crisps and their sense of smell using different types of foods. They look at the effect of heat on potatoes, seeing how they change after being cooked. They know the names for the external features of human beings and plants, and know what plants need to grow. Pupils carry out a lot of work that is related to their health such as hygiene and looking after their teeth. They carry out tests and record their findings using tables and graphs.

94 In the juniors the level of work carried out by pupils grows in sophistication. Year 3 pupils set out to find out if all metals are attracted to magnets. They continue their explorations discovering which of a range of magnets is the strongest. This investigation takes account of the need to carry out tests fairly and to record results and measurements accurately. The results are recorded clearly, with good standards of handwriting, and are converted to create neat graphs. In Year 4 pupils learn the correct names for bones; they learn about the function and mechanism of different types of joint and compare the skeletons of other animals such as whales and shrews. Some very high quality marking encourages pupils to think carefully about their ideas and understanding.

95 In Year 5 pupils consider the change from solid to liquid and from liquid to gas, linking their work with studies of the water cycle in geography. In Year 6 pupils consider food chains, learning about the complex relationships between plants and animals and how animals adapt to their environment, such as how the size and shape of birds' beaks alter according to their feeding habits. Good use is made of opportunities to extend the work through homework and the use of the Internet for research.

96 The quality of teaching in science is good overall. Teachers are aware that science needs to be taught as a practical subject and they are clear in their planning of lessons about just what they want pupils to learn, understand and do. Some lessons focus on developing specific skills, as in Year 5, when pupils learn how to measure the capacity of different containers using measuring cylinders and funnels. There are still some topics that need to have a greater practical component to develop skills in measuring, recording and carrying out investigations.

97 Pupils are assessed regularly in science. This information is used to identify individuals who need support to reach their full potential and areas of study that need to be revisited to clarify pupils' understanding. Assessment information is stored on computer to allow easy access for all teachers and clear information on pupils' progress. The information also provides reliable information for the school to set targets for results in national tests.

98 Computers are used well to enrich science. They are used to draw graphs of results and to write accounts of experiments. Computers are used to research topics, and pupils use the Internet regularly as part of their everyday work. In one lesson in Year 5 computers were used to time pupils' reactions. The theory being tested was that pupils who regularly use computer games will have faster reactions than those who don't. Pupils tested each other, using the computer as a timer and then built up information on a spreadsheet that could calculate totals and averages. In other lessons video recorders and projectors are used to enhance lessons and make topics more interesting and meaningful.

99 Pupils are positive about science; they enjoy lessons and this reflects the overall provision for science, which is good.

ART AND DESIGN

100 The standards attained by seven and eleven-year-olds are above average, with considerable strengths in some year-groups. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Good progress is made by all the pupils, and in some instances those who struggle with other aspects of their school work achieve well in art and design. When teaching is at its best, many pupils make rapid progress and produce finished work of a high standard. They rightly take pride in the end results, and in this and other respects art is making an important contribution to their personal and cultural development. This includes experience of different cultural traditions, for example in work of high quality on Aztec design and Hindu headdresses.

101 Pupils in the infant age-group are learning to observe carefully. When looking at a real example of a collage portrait, for example, they noticed that the paper had been torn rather than cut and that the pieces were overlapping. With skilled questioning, they were beginning to see how light and shade were created, giving depth to the portrait. Pupils in Year 2 have developed a good range of practical skills. When creating their own collage portraits they understood that the background should be started first and that the size and positioning of the subject needs to be planned: 'You make it large but have to leave room for the hair', as one child pointed out.

102 Older pupils, including the two from minority ethnic groups, work with obvious enjoyment and commitment to the task in hand. In a very successful Year 5 lesson, some talented pupils worked to a high standard, using a good range of media and evaluating their efforts thoughtfully and constructively. Technical skills were good: for example, one pupil experimented with chalk to produce white highlights, giving an impression of objects shining in the light. Some work on display in the upper junior classes is impressive for the age-group. On the basis of the work seen in sketch books, however, the pupils are not given enough chance to develop their skills by drawing from life, experimenting and collecting ideas for use in their future work. Pupils in Year 6 have only an average ability to discuss the ideas and methods used by well-known artists, sometimes lacking the understanding to talk about visual elements clearly. In discussion a group of capable older pupils did not understand that artists sometimes communicate ideas without working in a representational style. In one or two classrooms the artwork on display is well presented and decorative but does not reflect the pupils' personal interpretation.

103 Pupils' work on display and in sketch books suggests that teaching is mainly good throughout the school. Teaching in the limited number of lessons observed during the inspection was of a high standard. In one excellent lesson the teacher succeeded in creating a true 'studio' atmosphere. Here the pupils experimented with still life compositions in a wide range of media, including water colour, acrylics, oil pastels, chalk and charcoal. The pupils were set challenging tasks such as representing objects in a limited range of natural, straw-coloured and beige tones. The teacher demonstrated first-rate subject expertise. He achieved a delicate balance between constructive criticism and enthusiastic support, enabling the pupils to move on and to make very good progress.

104 The teaching programme is organised effectively on the basis of recent national guidelines. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced, and the pupils have sufficient opportunities to work in different media such as clay and fabrics. The use of ICT to support learning is a strength, with highly effective use made of the digital camera and other aids. Very good use is made of the Internet to access the work of established artists and there is a permanent record of pupils' work on various websites. The subject is making a good contribution to other areas of the curriculum, as in work on ancient Egypt in Year 4 and theatrical headdresses created in Year 6.

105 Art is very effectively led. The co-ordinator has had the opportunity to monitor classroom practice throughout the school in person and has been supported in this by a knowledgeable member of the governing body. Both have produced informative reports to support future development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106 By the age of seven, pupils achieve average standards. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in their learning and by the time they are 11 they are achieving standards that are above average. Standards of attainment are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection.

107 By the age of seven, pupils undertake satisfactory range of activities to promote their design and making skills. Pupils work with a range of recycled materials, card and textiles developing their skills of cutting, sticking and joining. Pupils in Year 2, design, make and test wheeled vehicles, from recycled materials using dowling for the axles and cotton reels for the wheels. They make glove puppets from felt and stick puppets from pipe cleaners and perform plays using the puppets they have made. Using construction kits, pupils find out how pulleys work and then create their own 'Incy, Wincy Spider' that winds up and down on a piece of string attached to a stick. Pupils in Year 1 design and make sandwiches, considering the type of bread and filling they would like to use. This work is built on effectively in Year 2 where pupils put together a lunch box that contained healthy foods.

108 By the age of 11, pupils disassemble everyday objects, for example purses, to see how they are constructed and how they work. Based on their observations they generate ideas and plans about how they are to make their own. For example pupils in Year 4 design money containers after they have studied the fastenings and mechanisms of different purses and wallets. They draw clearly labelled drawings, some of which are innovative in design, indicating what materials they intend to use and how the money container will be closed. They make different designed purses from paper and assess which is likely to work best and therefore which to make in fabric. In a lesson in Year 4, pupils were making their purses from felt, using a range of stitches to join the pieces together. Examination of pupils' previous work in Year 4 indicates the same attention to detail and production of work of good quality. For example, pupils had researched and designed chairs and then made them from a range of recycled materials, fabric and papier-mâché.

109 In a lesson in Year 5, pupils were making a wide range of musical instruments from recycled materials based on designs they had made. The body of the instruments was often made from papier-mâché, and pupils were carefully painting the outside or attaching strings to a 'guitar'. Throughout the lesson pupils were evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their designs and the limitations of instruments that are not professionally made.

110 Examination of pupils' work in the current Year 6 class underlines the careful attention that the school gives to the research, design and making elements of the process. Pupils in Year 6 had undertaken research about Hindu patterns and headdresses and had designed their own in preparation for the making a headdress to use in a performance of a play about Rama and Sita. In previous work pupils had made and tested shopping bags, and had created shelters of good quality from wood, card and fabric. In one example, the door of the shelter was designed as a Venetian blind that could be lowered and lifted using a pulley mechanism.

111 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers set high expectations for pupils' attention, concentration and effort. They effectively question the pupils, encouraging them to consider important factors in the design and making process. For example, in a lesson in Year 2 the teacher focused the pupils' attention on healthy foods, as they considered the choices for their lunch boxes. The teachers value the contributions that pupils make, fostering their self-confidence and self-esteem. Lessons are well organised, with a good range of activities to promote pupils' skills and maintain their interest. In response, pupils settle well to their tasks and work well. In Year 5, for example, pupils were engrossed in making and painting their musical instruments. They spoke knowledgeably about the process in which they were engaged, the problems that they had encountered and how they were seeking to overcome them. Pupils are well supported in their learning by the class teachers and support staff. A particularly good example of this was seen in the Year 4 class, where the very good level and high quality support that the pupils received enabled them to make very good progress in their learning.

112 There is good guidance for the teaching of this subject. Pupils are provided with a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, including food technology. There are good links made with other subjects, for example, literacy, science and religious education. In Year 1, for example, pupils write instructions about how to make a sandwich and in Year 2 pupils consider healthy options and the importance of a balanced diet. Pupils frequently use computer programs and the Internet to research projects on, for example, styles of chairs, shopping bags and Hindu patterns. There is a whole school system of assessing and monitoring pupils' progress as they move through the school. The co-ordinator has worked effectively to raise the profile of the subject, developing the curriculum and improving the quality and range of resources. He monitors on an informal basis the standards that pupils achieve.

GEOGRAPHY

113 Standards in geography in the junior classes have been maintained since the last inspection and are typical of the age-group at the end of Year 6. Geography was not a focus in Years 1 and 2 during this inspection, and there was only one piece of recorded evidence from last year. Discussion with pupils now in Year 3 confirmed that some topics had been covered, but their recollections were not firm enough to judge standards. Pupils with special educational needs in the juniors receive appropriate support in class enabling them to participate fully in all activities. The two pupils for whom English is an additional language understand very well and take full part in the lessons. The large number of worksheets used in some classes suggests that pupils of higher ability are not always suitably challenged,

however. There are no discernible differences in the attainment of boys and girls. There are strengths through the juniors in pupils' map reading skills.

114 By the end of Year 2, pupils know where Scotland is and understand what is the difference between an island and the mainland. Pupils who have spent half a term in Year 3 display a confident and accurate knowledge of globes and maps, and are quick to find Great Britain and the Caribbean. This knowledge of map work shows the success of work previously undertaken in Year 2. This focused on the local area, using plans and maps to follow a route.

115 By the end of Year 5, pupils have developed a wide knowledge of environmental problems both in this country and abroad. For example, they know how water is used across the planet, compare its use and conservation in Africa and Britain and start to understand what a challenge conservation poses. By the end of Year 6, pupils have studied physical features such as mountains and coastlines and know how they affect people's lifestyles as well as the effect of human activity on landscapes.

116 Only two lessons were observed during the inspection, so judgements are also based on an analysis of samples of pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils. Evidence indicates that overall the quality of geography teaching is satisfactory and often good. During the inspection teaching in the lessons observed was good because teachers had planned thoroughly for an interesting variety of tasks. Both teachers had high expectations of their pupils who were constantly stimulated with new ideas and intrigued by tasks. For example, in Year 5, the more able pupils studied photographs of village life in Mali and sorted them into different ways in which people used water. They then used their literacy skills to comment on what they had discovered.

117 The subject is enhanced by a good range of resources and by the way that ICT is used for research. Throughout the school teachers make helpful links with other subjects. For example, pupils use their mathematical skills well when they record data on graphs and compare the height of mountains. They use literacy skills to make notes or list items for the key to a map.

118 The management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator is very experienced, and keen that the subject should develop further. For example, she has adapted the curriculum to include a topic on 'changing cities'; this includes Calcutta, giving pupils opportunities to gain additional insights into contrasting cultures and ways of life. She regularly sees teachers' plans and samples of pupils' work. When geography is identified as a high priority in the development plan, she monitors teaching through the school. Brief but useful assessments are completed termly against National Curriculum criteria.

HISTORY

119 Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and are average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. Overall, pupils achieve well as they move through the school, building their understanding and knowledge steadily. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates, because either work is adapted to their needs or the teacher gives them extra support. There is no discernible difference in the progress of girls and boys.

120 By the end of Year 2, pupils start to have an idea of time and how people's way of life has changed since long ago. For example, lessons last year about the Great Fire of London gripped pupils' imaginations, so that pupils now in Year 3 remembered and described vividly not just the fire but also house materials and living conditions of the time,

contrasting them to nowadays. Pupils in Year 1 start to understand how to use 'clues' to make inferences. In a lesson they were intrigued by items found in a 'mislaid shopping bag', and discussed long and hard before deciding that the bag belonged to David Beckham! Pupils now in Year 2 further developed their ability to infer by looking closely at a modern and an old book. They used clues such as smell and the spotted appearance of one page to deduce which was the older. Pupils' sense of chronology has not yet developed beyond 'now' and 'a long time ago'.

121 By the end of Year 6, pupils have acquired a good body of historical knowledge about facets of life in Victorian England. They have used a variety of sources to investigate the reforms that gradually improved working conditions in mines and factories, and they know how very different were the lives of rich and poor people, especially children. There are good opportunities for pupils to use ICT to find more about school topics, both at school and at home.

122 Pupils develop their literacy skills effectively in some history lessons. For example, a pupil in Year 6 wrote a perceptive commentary on the Factory Acts: 'I am happy that people realised how dangerous it was for children, but the Acts didn't make much difference, because children were still allowed to work.'

123 The quality of teaching is usually good. Teachers are confident and knowledgeable and convey their enthusiasm to the pupils. Classes are well managed and pupils listen very attentively and respond well in discussions. They savour specialist words and enjoy using them, for example, 'amulet' or 'sarcophagus', as they explain their meanings and significance. Occasionally teachers miss opportunities to develop pupils' research skills in the use of reference books by finding information for them.

124 There is a sound curriculum in place. Further adjustment to the infant teaching programme is, however, needed to ensure the steady development of historical skills, especially in the class catering for a mixed age-group. History is taught regularly through the year so that pupils have constant opportunities to reinforce and build up their historical skills. The topics are enriched by visits to places of interest such as the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings. Assessment is brief but regular, and indicates how successfully pupils are attaining against National Curriculum requirements. Learning resources are satisfactory but would benefit from more artefacts. The co-ordinator is new to the subject and is enthusiastic about developing the role during the year. History has high profile this year, and so although she has not yet formed an accurate picture of standards through monitoring teaching, this will happen in the next few months. She already sees teachers' plans and samples of pupils' work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

125 Standards at the time of the last inspection were average in the infants and above average in the juniors. What is expected of schools has developed considerably since 1998, yet the school has managed to raise standards in both key stages. In the infants standards are above average and in the juniors standards are well above average. The school sets great store by the importance of ICT. The school's website has won a national award for its quality and in all aspects of school life, from communication with parents via e-mail, to recording pupils' attainment so that all teachers have access to the information, the use made of ICT is excellent.

126 In Year 1, pupils use computers to improve their mathematical skills. Working in a small group with a skilled and knowledgeable classroom assistant, pupils carry out calculations on screen that involve making 10 pence in a variety of ways using different

coins; they then 'make purchases', calculating the amount of change. In Year 2 pupils write using computers. They create stories, changing the size of letters, and cleverly indicate direct speech by using a different colour for the words actually spoken. Year 2 pupils also design cards for Fathers' Day, draw graphs to record weather conditions and label parts on a diagram of the human body using computers. Pupils learn how to control a 'roamer' device that responds to programmed instructions about distance and direction. Pupils also use computers to support their work in geography, devising imaginary maps and labelling features.

127 In Year 6 standards are high. Pupils create 'personal profiles' about themselves to be included on the school website. These are highly sophisticated, using pictures taken with digital cameras, text devised by themselves and music to accompany different sections. Pupils skilfully include amusing facts about themselves and merge pictures and motifs in what finish up as thoroughly professional-looking presentations; these are completed by all pupils not just the more able 'whizz kids', though theirs tend to be even more sophisticated.

128 The use of ICT is part of pupils' everyday experience. In Year 5 pupils watch a PowerPoint display about the use of spreadsheets to calculate electricity bills. They then build their own database using results from a test on reactions that uses computers to time pupils' response time and then records their performance. Pupils in Year 5 communicate by e-mail with friends in a school in California on a regular basis, as well as using the Internet for research.

129 ICT is used exceptionally well across the curriculum. Pupils write letters about the construction of a by-pass in geography. They write poems, design ideal bedrooms and create presentations about the human skeleton. The impact is not limited to computers. Each classroom has its own fixed video recorder and digital cameras are used regularly, for instance on school trips. The school has devices to measure light intensity and temperature that pass the information directly into the data base of computers.

130 Pupils make good progress throughout the school. Regular access to computers within classes and in the specialist suite as part of a well devised curriculum ensures that pupils experience a very good range of activities in all aspects of ICT both in specialist lessons and across the curriculum as a whole. This progress is accelerated in Years 5 and 6 and pupils' progress in these years is very good.

131 The quality of teaching is at least good and sometimes very good. Class teachers are very competent and confident in using ICT in their lessons. Their very good management of pupils ensures that, whether pupils work in small groups or individually, they are purposefully occupied and work well. Very good use is made of classroom assistants who are themselves well trained and confident about how to help pupils to learn. Teachers are well supported by the documentation that provides ideas for lessons and how to record pupils' attainment and progress, so that they know what pupils can do and what they need to do next to move on. The deployment of the school suite is very good. It is somewhat restricted, with only seven or eight machines, but the classes are split and groups are formed that enable pupils to work on computers one at a time or, at worst, two to a machine.

132 The school feels that its provision for ICT is a strength of the school and inspection findings entirely support this view. ICT is well taught and is used imaginatively to enrich other subjects. The school is not complacent about its provision, new computers are currently on order to enable half classes to use the suite and a scheme of formal accreditation of pupils' attainment is currently being implemented.

MUSIC

133 On the basis of the two lessons observed in the junior classes, plus a recording of compositions from one year, overall standards are average by the age of 11 and the pupils are making steady progress. The position was much the same at the time of the last inspection. The older pupils come into their own when performing, however, and are capable of producing work of a high standard in this respect. Because of the timing of the inspection and the timetabling of music in Years 1 and 2, it was not possible to observe any lessons at the infant stage.

134 In Year 3 the pupils listen carefully enough to echo accurately short rhythmic phrases clapped by the teacher and identify a nursery rhyme from the rhythmic pattern alone. Eventually, working in pairs, they produce their own simple compositions consisting of a clapped phrase and instrumental response. The pupils are beginning to read notation in the form of crotchets and quavers, but this is at an early stage. Unison singing is of an average standard in this class.

135 In a very successful lesson, Year 6 pupils prepared for a performance of 'The Owl and the Pussycat', involving choral speech as well as singing and instrumental accompaniment. The pupils worked very confidently, demonstrating strong performance skills. They were well focused, their timing was good and they projected their voices well. Choruses were performed with great zest and the pupils clearly enjoyed the session tremendously. Singing was generally of good quality, although notes in the upper range were sometimes out of tune. Pupils playing woodwind and tuned percussion instruments sustained their parts well. Perceptive comments were made by the pupils about how their performance could be improved.

136 Not enough lessons were seen to make an overall judgement about teaching. In both the lessons seen preparation and planning were good, and teachers' subject knowledge was thoroughly secure. In one case expectations of the pupils were very high, and the pupils responded by working with commitment. In another, the pupils needed slightly firmer management to avoid unnecessary 'noises off' as they handled untuned percussion instruments.

137 Assemblies and collective worship are contributing well to the pupils' musical development. Singing is whole-hearted, with all pupils and staff joining in unselfconsciously. Pupils sing with a taped accompaniment better than most, but respond very enthusiastically when given a strong lead by a 'live' accompanist, a regular visitor to the school. The pupils articulate words clearly, keep together and sing well in tune. Sometimes their singing lacks subtlety and the tone becomes slightly coarse, however. Recorded music is used effectively to create the right atmosphere for worship, and opportunities are not lost to introduce the pupils to a range of musical styles and composers.

138 Some pupils receive tuition from the music service in violin, recorder, woodwind, keyboard and singing, on a fee-paying basis. Those in Year 6 perform to a good standard and make a valuable musical contribution to their year-group.

139 The subject co-ordinator has been appointed recently and has not yet had time to make her mark. Resources throughout the school have been checked against the requirements of the new scheme of work, based on national guidance. These are well organised and of good quality, including a collection of ethnic instruments for each key stage. Some use is made of ICT to support the music curriculum, but there is scope for further development here. Music has high priority for monitoring, review and development this term, and the new co-ordinator has some good ideas about the way forward. After a gap

following the departure of the last co-ordinator, she is re-establishing the school choir, with help from an outside specialist. This venture is on the way to being a success. Overall, music is making a good contribution to the pupils' personal and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

140 Standards remain above average at the end of both key stages, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Fairhaven's reputation as a school that is good at sport is well founded.

141 In the infants pupils learn how to move in controlled ways, developing basic gymnastic movements and balances in some lessons and how to move in response to music in others. Basic ball skills like throwing and catching are taught as part of a well-conceived programme, that enables pupils' skills to be developed progressively in the context of appropriate games and activities. In the juniors the provision is extended to three sessions of physical education per week for all pupils. In Years 3 and 4 this includes swimming. By the time they leave nearly all pupils exceed the standards expected nationally, and many pupils achieve water skills badges and awards that far exceed the basic expectations.

142 In one Year 6 lesson pupils displayed good gymnastic skills in their work on balance and counter-balance. Initially pupils worked on the floor, revisiting ideas of how to balance and support each other devised in earlier lessons. The work was then taken onto large apparatus, climbing frames, beams and boxes. Pupils worked together with minimum fuss, taking out equipment, positioning mats, cooperating and assisting each other. As a result there was plenty of time for pupils to work on their balances and sequences. Similarly in a games lesson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 displayed good skills in the four activities running simultaneously, rugby, football, hockey and netball/basketball. In these mixed gender groups pupils demonstrated the ability to pass accurately, an appreciation of tactics and the capacity to referee the games sensibly and fairly themselves.

143 The attainment of pupils and the progress they make is not limited to what they learn in lessons. There is an exceptional programme of extra-curricular activities and opportunities for competitive sport that involve a very large proportion of the junior pupils. During the inspection 22 pupils from Years 4 to 6 attended a netball practice and on the next evening there was a school football match, two netball matches and another netball practice with younger pupils. This level of involvement is usual at Fairhaven and it often results in success in competitive sports at a district level. The school has been chosen to represent Dudley in competitions involving schools from the Black Country authorities on a number of occasions in a variety of sports.

144 The quality of teaching in physical education is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers are well prepared for lessons, setting a good example with their own dress code and making sure that equipment is out and ready for use. All lessons begin with warm up activities that prepare pupils for the main activities. Teachers demonstrate enthusiasm for the subject, which is transmitted to pupils, and results in keenness and enjoyment on their part. In gymnastics and dance lessons teachers ask pupils to demonstrate for the rest of the class, so that ideas are shared and pupils have the opportunity to perform. Where teaching is very good in Year 4 the teacher's specialist knowledge is used to fine-tune performance and take pupils' work in dance to higher levels, through subtle developments of technique, encouraging them to consider the position and shape of their hands and to 'freeze' dramatically.

145 Physical education is managed very effectively. The coordinator is well informed. She ensures that teachers have good documentation to work from when planning lessons and simple, but effective, ways to record attainment and progress, using school computers. Many staff commit themselves to supporting activities outside the normal school day and this plays its part in ensuring that the overall provision for physical education is very good. Fairhaven is currently working towards obtaining formal recognition of this through the national 'Sportsmark Award' scheme.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

146 By the age of seven and 11, pupils achieve satisfactory standards that meet the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Since the last inspection the standards achieved have been maintained. Although the pupils' achievement is satisfactory, standards could be higher.

147 By the age of seven, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of important festivals in the Christian religion, including Christmas and Easter. More able pupils know that Jesus was nailed to the cross at Easter, and that 'he came back alive', and that this was a reason for celebration. They know about some of the important events in the life of Jesus for example, Palm Sunday and the Last Supper. In a lesson in a Year 1/2 class, pupils talked about special days and ceremonies and recalled their visit to a local church where they saw a baby christened. The spoke knowledgeably about how the vicar had made the sign of the cross with water on the baby's head. Pupils have some insight into beliefs and practices of other religions. In the same class, for example, more able pupils spoke about the Hindu festival of Divali. In a lesson in a Year 1 class, pupils celebrated the Shabbat, and displayed a satisfactory understanding of the importance of the meal to the Jewish people. In a previous lesson pupils had learned about the Jewish festival of Sukkot. They had built a Sukkah (a shelter), from card, twigs and leaves, and they spoke about how there needed to be a hole in the roof 'so that people could see the stars'.

148 By the age of 11, pupils have a developing understanding of the beliefs and practices of some of the world religions, for example Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. Pupils understand the importance of symbols in Christianity, for example the cross and the fish and the significance of the use of different colours in the Church of England. In a lesson in the Year 3 class, pupils showed an understanding of religious metaphors, using the terms 'Jesus the Light of World' and 'God is my Rock'. They have some insight into the importance of the Bible for Christians and recall stories from the Old and New Testaments. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of some of the world religions. They know the names of the places of worship, and have some knowledge of beliefs and practices. In a lesson in the Year 4 class, pupils recalled that Hindus worship one God who they call Brahman, and that they worship other deities such as Vishnu. In discussions, pupils talked with enthusiasm about the story in the Ramayana about Rama and Sita. They described the hats that they were designing and making in preparation for a play they were to perform. They spoke about the Qur'an, and explained the importance for followers of Islam of making a journey to Mecca once in their lifetime.

149 The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons the work is well planned and organised so pupils of all abilities are able to learn well. Teachers often set time targets to encourage pupils to concentrate well and work hard. In all lessons teachers manage the pupils well and in response they behave well and work hard. Lessons are particularly effective when pupils are provided with pictures to stimulate their interest or practical tasks to perform. For example, in a lesson in a Year 1 class pupils participating in the Shabbat meal were attentive and well behaved and thoroughly enjoyed eating the bread and drinking the 'wine'. They made good gains in their learning. In a lesson in a Year 1/2

class, the teacher used posters of 'special days' well to engage and maintain the pupils' interest. Throughout the lesson pupils were attentive and keen to contribute their ideas. In some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 2, there are insufficient resources to stimulate pupils' interest or to enrich their experience. In many lessons teachers question pupils well, effectively assessing their knowledge and understanding. However, there are occasions when teachers' questioning does not encourage pupils to reflect on their own experiences or to empathise with the feelings of others.

150 This subject has not been a priority for development in recent times. The school is currently assessing how best to develop the curriculum in the light of changes both locally and nationally. At the present time, the curriculum has both strengths and weaknesses. There are good links with other subjects such as art and design and technology. Pupils draw rangoli and mendhi patterns, make diva lamps from clay, and create hats for a play about Rama and Sita. The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, there are good opportunities for pupils to consider the importance of friends and relationships. This work is well supported, with references to the sayings of Jesus, in particular how we ought to behave towards one another.

151 However, close examination of pupils' current work indicates that there is sometimes an over-dependence on worksheets with too few opportunities for them to use and extend their literacy skills or to present their work in a variety of forms. There is also limited use of computer technology to support pupils' learning in this subject. Pupils visit local places of worship including local Christian churches, and sometimes the Dudley Temple. The provision for pupils to visit the temple is inconsistent and is not always arranged at a time that effectively supports pupils' learning in the classroom.

152 The subject co-ordinator has worked hard and has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to move the school forward. This includes simplifying and improving the curriculum; developing the use of literacy skills in the subject; developing ways of checking and recording pupils' progress as they move through the school; and improving resources, particularly in Key Stage 2.