

INSPECTION REPORT

CASLON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Cradley, Halesowen

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103801

Headteacher: Mrs J Phipps

Reporting inspector: Mr P Mann
23219

Dates of inspection: 4th – 7th November 2002

Inspection number: 246317

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Beeches View Avenue
Cradley
Halesowen
West Midlands
Postcode: B63 2ES

Telephone number: 01384 818875

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs S Sellers

Date of previous inspection: 1st December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Phil Mann 23219	Registered inspector	Children in the Foundation Stage Design and technology Physical education Religious education	Standards - Attainment and progress
Brian Jones 9542	Lay inspector		Standards - Attitudes, behaviour, personal development Attendance Spiritual, moral, social and cultural and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Ken Hobday 21372	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music	How well is the school led and managed? Efficiency of the school
Lily Evans 23300	Team inspector	English Art and design	Special educational needs How good are curricular and other opportunities? Monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development Educational and personal guidance - assessment
Mike Dukes 32197	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History	English as an additional language Inclusion How well are pupils taught?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Caslon Primary School has 226 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11, and the average class size is 21. It serves a residential area on the fringe of Halesowen. The school is located within an educational action zone and an above average number of pupils receive a free school meal. The buildings date from 1953 and they are surrounded by play areas and a playing field. At the time of the inspection, there were 45 children under five in the reception classes and the part time nursery. The attainment of children at the start of school is well below average. Thirty-five per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and this is well above the national average. There is currently only one pupil with a Statement of Special Educational Need and 14 who require support from outside agencies. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The headteacher and staff work very hard to provide good learning opportunities for pupils in the school within a caring and supportive environment. New initiatives and school improvement have often been hampered by a high turnover of teaching staff. The headteacher has provided effective leadership through this difficult period. Standards are still low but inspection evidence confirms that the rate of progress is now increasing and the quality of education is satisfactory. Taking into consideration the limited resources available, standards attained and circumstances of the locality, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Language development in the infants is good and pupils across the school are making good progress in aspects of writing.
- History is taught well, developing a love of the subject by the pupils.
- The teaching of computer skills is good.
- Staff care well for the pupils and develop positive relationships with them, resulting in pupils having very positive attitudes to learning.
- The school has established a strong partnership with its parents.
- The headteacher and senior staff provide clear leadership.

What could be improved

- Continue to improve standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Standards in music and geography at the age of 11 years.
- Make better use of information to set individual pupil targets for improvement.
- Long-term planning for school improvement.
- The quality and quantity of homework for junior pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement on the key issues identified in the previous inspection. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is now appropriate for these children. Pupils have good opportunities to write and improvements have been made in how science is taught. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	E	E	E	E	well above average A
Mathematics	E	E	E*	E*	above average B
Science	E*	E	E*	E*	average C
					below average D
					well below average E
					very low E*

Pupils are making satisfactory progress overall in relation to their prior attainment, as they move through the school, from a baseline that is well below the national average. This is particularly so in children's communication, early literacy skills and personal and social development. Inspection evidence confirms these low standards on entry into the school. Standards attained by 11-year-olds have been very low in the past and well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. A very large proportion of the pupils are on the school's special educational needs record and this factor has a significant influence on the overall standards achieved. The results in the 2002 national tests were lower than expected in English, mathematics and science, but the school is endeavouring to improve standards for the future and inspection evidence confirms this to be the case.

The lack of stability in staffing has been a major hindrance to the school in raising standards. Teachers have either moved into posts of responsibility in other schools or left the profession for personal reasons. The headteacher and governors have endeavoured to appoint high quality teachers, and the quality of teaching observed during the inspection confirms this to be so. As a result, progress is now much better this term. Inspection findings judge that standards of pupils currently in Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science but standards are improving lower down the school. Here, good progress is being made by the infants in literacy skills due to good teaching and a strong focus on phonic development from the reception class upwards.

All pupils in the infants and juniors are making good progress in history. Pupils enjoy the subject and gain much enjoyment and cultural development through the study of the past. Progress is also good in information and communication technology and religious education, but is best for the junior pupils. Standards in music are still below average and this is a similar finding to that at the time of the previous inspection. Improvements were made in the level of staff expertise and quality of teachers' planning, but recent changes to staffing have meant that standards have yet again fallen in the juniors. Geography is not taught across the school to the same depth as history and some elements of the subject are not fully planned for. All pupils are, however, making satisfactory progress in all other subjects and standards are in line with those expected of 7 and 11-year-olds.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to the school and their learning. This is helping them to improve their standards. When a topic catches their imagination, such as their own Ancient Egyptian museum, their response is superb.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good and orderly in lessons and around school. A few pupils in the juniors have difficulties, but the other pupils sustain high standards.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships between pupils and with adults enable pupils to learn well. Pupils contribute increasingly to the life of the school.
Attendance	Attendance improved significantly last year and is now at a satisfactory level. Punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and no unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. A good proportion of teaching is good or better and this is especially so in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Teachers inspire and motivate the pupils and they, in turn, respond well. The provision for practical and group activity is good in lessons and this is developing the pupils' personal and social skills. Computer skills are taught effectively in the new suites and this is having a positive impact on raising standards. Teachers manage pupils with specific behavioural difficulties very well but, sometimes, this can slow down the progress made by other pupils in the class while problems are resolved in a positive way. Teachers have worked hard to implement good assessment procedures to monitor pupils' achievements but, sometimes, this information is not always used effectively to plan for the next stages in the pupils' work. The quality and quantity of homework in the juniors is inconsistent between classes and year groups, with the result that its contribution to pupils' learning is minimal.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Planning ensures there is a suitable programme of visits, including residential trips. Visitors are invited into school to enrich pupils' learning experiences. The effective implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies has enriched the pupils' language development and number skills. This is demonstrated in their enjoyment of poetry and use of computer programs to practise mathematics.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. As a result, these pupils make sound progress in nearly all areas. However, pupils sometimes miss important aspects of work when withdrawn from lessons in several subjects. Work is sometimes at an inappropriate level to meet their needs in literacy lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school is welcoming and friendly to all these pupils and there are good examples of the school showing that it values having pupils from different cultural backgrounds. However, not enough is done to find out about the educational needs of these pupils to make sure they do as well as their classmates.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides well overall. Strengths in moral and social provision enable pupils to work well together. The school is successful in building pupils' self esteem and confidence.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils. It takes great care of their health and safety, and is vigilant in child protection. First aid is high quality.

The school has worked hard to establish good links with parents and carers of pupils at school. The training of some to be teaching assistants and play-leaders has been a particular success.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides capable and caring leadership and has managed the school well through a difficult period. She is supported well by able senior staff. Frequent staffing changes have reduced the impact of this support and rendered effective delegation difficult.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They are less effective in steering the long-term development of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has monitored carefully how well English and mathematics are taught and acted appropriately to improve pupils' learning and behaviour. Some other subjects require closer monitoring.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school makes appropriate use of its financial resources. It uses computer technology very effectively to support learning and school administration. It is beginning to implement principles of best value successfully.

The school has satisfactory staffing. It has recruited successfully to meet staff shortages and has a good team of teachers and assistants. It has good accommodation, with new computer suites for both infants and juniors. There is a good range of resources to support learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Eight parents attended the pre-inspection meeting with the inspection team. Forty-six per cent returned the questionnaires; this is a good rate of response.

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like the school. • They have clear information about how their children are getting on. • The school works well with parents. • The school has improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents express some concern about homework, particularly for the older children. • Some parents would like to see more activities outside lessons.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. It notes particularly the school's success in enabling parents to give good support to their children's learning. The inspectors agree that the older children need more homework. However, the range of outside activities and clubs matches that seen at primary schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils are making satisfactory progress overall in relation to their prior attainment as they move through the school. Assessments undertaken when children first come into the reception class clearly indicate that their achievements are well below the national average for that expected of 5-year-olds. This is particularly so in these children's communication, early literacy skills and personal and social development. Inspection evidence confirms these low standards. Standards attained by 11-year-olds have been very low in the past and well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. A very large proportion of the pupils are on the school's special educational needs record and this factor has a negative impact on the overall standards achieved. The results in the 2002 national tests were lower than expected in English, mathematics and science, but the school is endeavouring to improve standards for the future and inspection evidence confirms this to be the case. Analysis of the 2002 results indicates that there are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls at 7 and 11 years. There are no significant variations in the attainment of pupils in relation to ethnicity. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make only satisfactory progress overall because extra provision and support is not effectively targeted to their specific individual needs by the school.
2. The table below shows attainment in English, mathematics and science judged by the inspection team and as achieved by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 in the 2002 tests, compared to all schools nationally and measured by what is known as points scores. These scores take into account the performance of all pupils in the year group.

	National tests Year 2 2002	Inspection judgements Year 2 2002	National tests Year 6 2002 [points scores]	Inspection judgements Year 6 2002
English	Reading Well below average Writing Well below average	Reading Below average Writing Below average	Well below average	Below average
Mathematics	Well below average	Below average	Well below average	Below average
Science	By teacher assessment Well below average	Below average	Well below average	Below average

3. The following table shows standards in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

	By the age of 7	By the age of 11
Information and communication technology	In line with that expected	In line with that expected
Art and design	In line with that expected	In line with that expected
Design and technology	In line with that expected	In line with that expected
Geography	In line with that expected	Below that expected
History	In line with that expected	In line with that expected
Music	In line with that expected	Below that expected
Physical education	In line with that expected	In line with that expected
Religious education	In line with that expected	In line with that expected

4. The recruitment and retention of teachers has been a continual struggle for the headteacher and governing body to resolve during 1999 - 2002 and this factor has been a major hindrance to the school in raising standards. Teachers have either moved into posts of responsibility in other schools or left the profession for personal reasons. The headteacher has endeavoured to appoint high quality teachers, and the quality of teaching observed during the inspection confirms this to be so. As a result, progress is now much better this term. Inspection findings judge that standards of pupils currently in Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science, but standards are improving lower down the school, where good progress is being made by infants in literacy skills due to good teaching and a strong focus on phonic development from the reception class upwards.
5. Children in the ¹Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress overall from the time they join the nursery until the end of the reception year. They make particularly good progress in language development in the reception class due to the recent changes in the teaching of phonics made by the newly appointed co-ordinator. The majority of children join the nursery with levels of attainment well below those expected nationally in many areas of learning and a significant number of children also have low levels of social development. By the time the children reach the end of the reception year, a good proportion will not have attained the early learning goals in all areas of learning, but some will have progressed into the National Curriculum. Progress in all areas of learning is satisfactory, but good progress is being made in their early literacy skills. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are effectively supported and make good progress in these classes.
6. Pupils in the infant classes are achieving well overall due to good teaching and planning for what is to be taught in lessons. Data being gathered by the school and inspection evidence confirms this improving picture. Teachers in the juniors work hard to inspire and motivate all pupils in their care, but a small number of pupils with identified behavioural difficulties display very challenging behaviour in class. Although this challenging behaviour is managed well, lessons are sometimes disrupted to the detriment of the achievement made by the other pupils. When this factor is combined with the problems associated with the recruitment of teachers, it can be seen why the rate of pupil progress

¹ **FOUNDATION STAGE**

The foundation stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development, but also include knowledge and understanding of the world and physical and creative development.

has been slow in the past. Inspection evidence confirms that the rate of progress is now improving.

7. The implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been well managed and this is having a positive effect on pupil achievements throughout the juniors. Older pupils are developing a love of writing and this is demonstrated effectively through the quality of their poetry work. For instance, a pupil in Year 6 wrote, '*Winter is the iceman, who comes every year, when he is here the coldness starts to appear. He strangles the birds' sweet song all winter long*'. Another pupil personified night by writing, '*He wears a robe of indigo silk that sparkles and shines as he wraps it around the Earth*'. There is also a good emphasis on number work and all pupils are making satisfactory progress in all aspects of mathematics. The setting of pupils into ability groups in Year 6 and within Years 3 to 5 is also supporting the school's drive to raise standards in both literacy and numeracy skills. Other strategies put in place by the school include a breakfast club to provide extra support in mathematics and booster classes. Pupils of all abilities are making satisfactory progress in science as they move through the school. Investigative work provides pupils with good opportunities for personal and social development. However, the school has not made enough progress in raising pupil standards throughout the school in the use of practical and investigative work. This was highlighted in the previous inspection report and continues to be an area for development.
8. All pupils in the infants and juniors are making good progress in history. Pupils enjoy the subject and gain much enjoyment and cultural development through the study of the past. For example, the study of the Ancient Egyptians clearly captured the imagination of pupils in the Years 3 and 4 classes, as demonstrated by the wealth of material on display in the 'school museum'. Progress is also good in information and communication technology. Teachers provide a good range of learning experiences for pupils in the infant and junior computer suites. Teaching is best for the older pupils and, as a result, junior pupils especially are making good progress. Pupils in the junior classes are also making good progress in religious education and this is supporting the school's personal and social development programme. These lessons provide many opportunities for the furthering of the pupils' spirituality and cultural development. Standards in music are still below average and this is a similar finding to that at the time of the previous inspection. Improvements were made in the level of staff expertise and quality of teachers' planning, but recent changes to staffing have meant that standards have yet again fallen in the juniors. Geography is also not taught to the same depth as history across the school. Some elements of the subject are not fully planned for and, as a result, there are gaps in the pupils' knowledge and understanding and standards are below those expected nationally at 11 years. All pupils are, however, making satisfactory progress in all other subjects and standards are in line with those expected of 7 and 11-year-olds.
9. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress overall in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly against individual education plan targets by some class teachers, teaching assistants and the special educational needs co-ordinator and through termly reviews. Review dates are specified and are kept up to date. Documentation for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need are of satisfactory quality, suitably maintained and pupils make satisfactory progress towards identified targets. Sometimes work is planned at too high a level for these pupils in literacy lessons and their progress is hampered by gaps in their previous knowledge.
10. The school recognises that the provision for pupils learning English as an additional language needs to be improved because staff have insufficient experience of teaching them. However, despite this, all teachers ensure that these pupils are fully included in lessons, which enables them to make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and their learning. They appreciate it as a calm and caring community. A pupil with special educational needs wrote: 'Everybody is happy and friendly. They are all kind and nice and help each other every day'. The school's strong moral and social provision has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes. These were good or better in 70 per cent of the lessons observed. This is helping pupils to improve their standards. They are very keen to answer teachers' questions. They play a lively part in discussions. They work independently. The previous inspection reported that some Year 6 boys lacked interest in their work. Year 6 boys now work willingly and hard. They are keen to do well in the national tests. Pupils show a keen interest in the wider curriculum. The school has a museum of the Ancient Egyptians. This catches pupils' imagination and their response is superb. A Year 5 pupil says she wants to be an archaeologist when she grows up!
12. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to learning. They apply themselves well in most lessons and sustain concentration for significant periods of time.
13. Behaviour is good overall and there are some positive features. Pupils behave well in lessons and at break times. They are eager to win praise from the staff. They respond well to rewards, which range from house points to extra 'Golden Time' for good work and behaviour. Pupils are orderly as they move around the school, for example into assemblies. However, the school's policy of full inclusion means there are pupils with behaviour difficulties. They account for only a small minority in any year group. If a pupil misbehaves, the rest of the class carries on learning but often at a slower rate until the problem is resolved. The school made two fixed-period exclusions in the past year. There are none in the current year. There was no disruptive or aggressive behaviour in the week of the inspection. Bullying is rare and parents are confident the school manages it effectively when it happens. Boys and girls work and play harmoniously together. Pupils from ethnic minorities say that they have experienced racist language, but the school acts very quickly to resolve it. In some instances, pupils are repeating phrases they have heard without understanding them. For example, a white pupil called another white pupil a 'Paki'. Pupils keep the outside areas free from litter. They welcome visitors with courtesy and friendship.
14. The school's very good social provision leads pupils to relate very well to one another and to staff. Willing co-operation in pairs or groups enables them to learn well together. Pupils share resources very efficiently. They build up friendships across the different age groups. Year 6 boys and girls enjoy acting as 'buddies' for the infants at lunchtime. They help them with play equipment, show them how to play games and skip, and make sure that nobody feels left out. Pupils are very aware of the effect of their actions on others. They take care to welcome new pupils who arrive at school in the middle of a school year. Pupils with special educational needs have good relationships with each other and staff. Most work collaboratively in pairs and small groups. They are too often withdrawn for parts of lessons for special teaching, and this works against full integration.
15. Pupils show very good personal responsibility in response to the extra opportunities the school now gives them. The previous inspection found that the under fives were over directed. This is no longer the case, and the youngest children learn by doing things on their own initiative. Throughout the school, pupils take increasing responsibility for their learning. Pupils in every class are responsible for keeping their classroom tidy and looking after the resources. There is a wide range of monitoring posts for Year 6 pupils. They undertake these with confidence and commitment. In the summer term, Year 6 pupils

pass their responsibilities to Year 5. This means Year 6 can concentrate on their national tests and Year 5 pupils have the chance to learn the tasks. Pupils collect enthusiastically for charities. Year 6 pupils go on a residential visit each autumn. This has a profound effect in building up their maturity and self-confidence.

16. Attendance is satisfactory. Last year the figure was 93.7 per cent. This was 2.8 per cent higher than the previous year. The school is on track to achieve a further increase in the present year. Traditionally, local industry has a 'shut down week' at the start of September and families used to take long holidays at this time. In 2002, only nine pupils were on holiday for over a week in the first half of the autumn term. Punctuality is good. Most pupils arrive on time. Some come extra early for breakfast club or to prepare as monitors.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall. This is broadly similar to the position found at the last inspection, when teaching was generally sound with a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
18. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed at this inspection. Across the infant and junior classes, 39 per cent of lessons observed were satisfactory, 33 per cent were good and 27 per cent were very good. This is slightly better than at the previous inspection. During this inspection, teaching seen in infant classes was good. It was satisfactory overall in the juniors, but very good for the oldest pupils. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects, although inspectors are unable to judge the teaching in geography as little teaching in this subject fell during the inspection week.
19. Very good teaching in the school is characterised by teachers securing good behaviour and having good quality teaching plans, which provide sufficient detail to allow for a close match of teaching to the individual needs of pupils. Teachers use a range of techniques and equipment to produce interesting and imaginative work that is presented in a lively and brisk manner. They ensure the pupils understand what they are expected to learn in the lesson and check whether the learning has been successfully achieved. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson the teacher skilfully questioned the pupils throughout the lesson, to find out who needed extra explanation, before quickly moving on to the next piece of learning. Good pace was maintained and, as a result, these pupils made very good progress complemented by a high standard of behaviour. In a Years 1 and 2 mathematics lesson, during a rapid-fire question and answer session on counting in twos, the pupils were encouraged to put their thumbs up when they understood, and thumbs down when they did not. This enabled the teacher to quickly assess when she needed to change her teaching or spend more time to explain a particular point before moving on.
20. Teachers work hard to inspire and motivate pupils in lessons. For instance, in a Year 6 history lesson on the Victorians, the teacher used real case studies of local children who worked in mines. She presented the work in a lively and creative way that captured the imagination of all the pupils, who maintained their interest to the end of the lesson with very good behaviour. Some very able pupils were set a challenge of finding information on the Internet about Lord Shaftesbury and reporting back to the class. Pupils of all abilities were interested and challenged and made good progress in their learning.
21. Time is not always used to best effect in some lessons because lessons are too long, for example in a geography lesson lasting for two hours. Such long lessons make it difficult for teachers to sustain the pupils' interest and to keep up a good pace of learning. As a result, pupils become restless and behaviour is difficult to manage. Restlessness and pupil behaviour are often made worse when pupils are withdrawn for support outside the

classroom. For instance, during a geography lesson, while the teacher was teaching the whole class, pupils left and entered the room at 10-minute intervals to read to a teaching assistant. As a result, these pupils missed 10 minutes of the teacher's introduction and the coming and going affected the concentration of all pupils. Progress is also slower when tasks are not fully matched to the ability of all the pupils in the class. In these cases, planning is not sufficiently detailed to identify these different groups of pupils. Similarly, in these lessons the teachers were not as effective as they could have been in assessing pupils' understanding during a lesson or in changing their teaching in response.

22. Overall, teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach is satisfactory. Generally, teachers are confident and able to impart their knowledge with ease. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught effectively, not only in English and mathematics but also in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in a Year 6 information and communication technology lesson using light sensors to gather data, the teacher linked the work with mathematical graphs. Similarly, in a Year 5 religious education lesson on conflict resolution the teacher provided good opportunities for speaking and listening through questioning and discussion.
23. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects. It is good in information and communication technology, religious education and history. The teaching of information and communication technology in the computer suite is a strength with junior pupils, who display a high level of interest and enthusiasm. However, there are not always sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop information and communication technology skills through other areas of the curriculum.
24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Teachers generally make effective use of teaching assistants, who effectively record the progress these pupils make towards their targets. Pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties are supported adequately in lessons and in small groups. Teachers ensure that support staff are effectively briefed through regular meetings. This enables these pupils to make sound progress towards their individual targets. The progress of these pupils is hampered in some English lessons, for example, when the teacher takes insufficient account of the levels of learning need. Their progress also slows when they are withdrawn from their own class to undertake different work from that of their classmates. This is particularly so when all groups of pupils in the class share the same lesson objective. Overall, the more able pupils make satisfactory progress. Information and communication technology is beginning to be used to support the learning of these pupils. At present, it is extensively used for record keeping and to make learning resources.
25. The school has effective systems for screening pupils to reveal possible learning difficulties, which works well for those who have special educational needs. These procedures are insufficiently tailored to identify the specific needs of those pupils who speak English as an additional language. In general, teachers are not sufficiently aware of the specific language needs of these pupils and are, therefore, unable to reflect these in their lesson plans. Teachers sometimes fail to see the distinction between special educational needs and the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language.
26. Teachers' day-to-day planning is satisfactory overall, but sometimes it does not fully take into account the needs of all abilities. In these cases, it is not clear how the higher-attaining pupils are to be extended or lower-attainers are to be supported. Learning intentions are made explicit in teachers' plans. In the best lessons these are shared with the pupils at the beginning of lessons and referred to at the end to see if they have been successfully accomplished. This ensures that the pupils and teachers are very clear about the purpose of the lesson, so that they can be focussed on the learning.

27. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and manage it well. Rewards and sanctions are made clear to pupils in a positive way and pupils respond well to this. Teachers in most lessons adopt a calm approach and relationships with pupils are very good. This leads to a good atmosphere for learning, in which pupils find it easy to maintain their interest and concentration. It is only on the few occasions that pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour are not sufficiently involved in their lessons. When this occurs these pupils become restless and their unsatisfactory behaviour impacts adversely on the learning of others.
28. Teachers use resources well, including computers, to make teaching lively and interesting. For instance, in a Year 2 lesson the teacher brought the story of Guy Fawkes to life by introducing a range of headgear and other objects from the period. These were then used effectively to re-enact the Gunpowder Plot. Lessons are generally conducted at a good pace, although sometimes teachers spend too long talking to the whole class before pupils are able to start on their individual tasks. Generally, teachers use teaching assistants well, although sometimes they are not sufficiently involved in the introductory part of a lesson.
29. The use of homework to support pupils' learning is unsatisfactory overall. It is good for pupils in the infants, but inconsistent in quality and quantity in the juniors. Inspectors agree with the concerns of parents that homework for junior pupils is insufficient and not well organised. Consequently, homework is not effectively contributing to the learning of these pupils.

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

30. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils of all ages, and all statutory requirements are met. There is a continued special emphasis on pupils' personal, social and health education embracing a good focus on spiritual, moral and cultural education. Since the previous inspection, the provision for pupils at the Foundation Stage has improved and is now satisfactory. It embraces the six curriculum areas and is planned to ensure a smooth transition to the initial years of the National Curriculum. The school has effectively implemented the literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology strategies without neglecting standards elsewhere. The school is involved in the education action zone strategy and has identified and targeted key areas for further development.
31. Since the introduction of Curriculum 2000, nationally available schemes of work have been adopted. Planning for religious education, history, geography, and personal and social education is good. There are suitable opportunities for visits to places of worship to complement religious studies. However, the alternate planning cycle for geography against history works against continuity in developing mapping skills, because of the time lapses between units. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, including sex education and the dangers of misuse of drugs. There is now an improved focus on pupils developing their ability to learn independently across the curriculum.
32. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum and staff provide much voluntary effort and time for this. There are football and gymnastics clubs, a homework club for Years 5 and 6, a breakfast club and a computer/mathematics club. Year 6 pupils also have opportunities to go on residential visits and to a residential outdoor centre, as well as visits to such places as Wyre Forest. Pupils in Year 5 compete in quizzes at the Birmingham 'Think Tank'. Visitors to school include the community

policeman, theatre groups and workshops, and there is a good range of coaching in games, including cricket and football.

33. This is a caring school where the needs of the pupils are paramount and where the headteacher and staff are sensitive to the emotional needs of all the pupils in their charge, including those pupils with special educational needs. Suitable targets are set for pupils whatever their needs. There are now good whole-school procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development. There is no specialist or expert help available at the school for pupils who speak English as an additional language and these pupils have their needs screened in the same way as for special educational needs. There is a lack of distinction amongst staff about the difference between special educational needs and the language needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
34. The school is active in ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all and results are analysed by gender and ethnicity to ensure this is so. Staff welcome the diversity of the school population and everyone joins in the celebrations of other faiths, for example the Hindu festival of Diwali.
35. The school has established good links with the local community to support pupils' learning. For instance, several parents have taken part in the 'Family Literacy Project' and several have gone on to NVQ Level 2 and 3 courses to train as teaching assistants in the school. Other parents have taken computer courses at the school. The setting up of a toddler group provides a good start for children entering the nursery. Good links also exist with other local primary schools. For example, staff have liaised with another school to plan the curriculum for children under five and are also working with another to develop a school council for pupils. The school has also established constructive links with local secondary schools, preparing pupils for their transfer through visits and attendance at concerts. Although there are good links with other teachers, the school has identified intra-agency links as an area for further development through the educational action zone initiative.
36. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Within its locality, there are instances of aggression and family instability. The school works hard to build pupils' self-esteem and help them feel safe and valued. This means pupils are well motivated and confident in their learning.
37. The school provides well for pupils' spiritual development. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Carefully planned assemblies play an important part in the life of the school. They meet statutory requirements and give pupils ample opportunity for reflection. Some pupils arrive at school with low self-confidence and self-esteem. Achievement assemblies each week celebrate their successes in learning and behaviour. A particular feature is the award for the class with the best attendance, which pupils are proud to win. The previous report noted that some older pupils showed disaffection. In contrast, the beauty of word pictures inspired current pupils in a lesson on modern poetry. The school uses a range of subjects to create awe and wonder. Clear evidence of improvement came when Year 4 pupils showed inspectors around the school's museum of life in Ancient Egypt. They were proud of the models they had made. The topic has captured their imagination.
38. The previous inspection found that moral development was a strength of the school. This continues at a very good standard. Staff continue to provide very good role models, and pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. The school is in an education action zone. It works in partnership with local authority staff, who have skills in behaviour support. A teacher from the local education authority and a member of Caslon's staff

taught together very effectively as a team in the week of the inspection to further the Year 6 pupils understanding of moral issues. The school sets out to promote good behaviour, rather than merely deter incorrect behaviour. Pupils accept that the school's rewards and sanctions are fair. Each class agrees its own rules within the school's policy. The school's firm anti-bullying procedures enable pupils to feel safe while they are at school. This has a favourable impact on their learning.

39. The school provides very well for pupils' social development. Social provision has improved even from the good level found in the last inspection. Teachers listen to pupils. They value their ideas and opinions. From nursery onwards, staff ask children to work together in pairs and groups, to share equipment, and to listen to one another in turn. In each class there are opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities. Year 6 pupils have additional scope as monitors. Every day, two junior girls and two junior boys are 'buddies' in the infant playground. In addition to looking after the younger pupils, they help them learn traditional games. The school has four houses: Saturn, Mars, Pluto and Earth. Each house has a captain and a vice captain. Last year, the school introduced a breakfast club. This gave some Year 6 pupils the chance to do extra mathematics and to develop their social skills. This year, a high proportion of pupils in Years 5 and 6 arrive for breakfast at 8 am. There is a homework club on Thursday afternoons. Residential visits give Year 6 pupils the opportunity to develop their social maturity. For some pupils, the visits are the first time they have ever spent a night away from home.
40. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Dramatic presentations range from children's Shakespeare, a circus day and a pantomime, to drugs awareness and anti-bullying. Pupils helped to create the 'Rock the Castle' programme for local radio. Stars from basketball and cricket build up pupils' skills and understanding of their sports. Pupils join the local brownies and the brass band, both of which use the school hall. Two Islamic pupils led an assembly, telling the whole school about the meaning of Eid and wearing their special clothes. The school has a display of the five pillars of Islam. A Hindu visitor explained Diwali, wearing her sari and telling the story of Rama and Sita. However, there are comparatively few activities to deepen pupils' understanding of other societies and of the world they live in. The school recognises this as an area for further development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. Good care for pupils was a strength of the school at the time of the previous inspection, and the school maintains this high standard. The school's positive ethos leads it to value its pupils and care well for them. The school consistently carries out its good policy for health and safety. There are risk assessments every term of all classrooms and corridors. The caretaker checks the site every day, repairing most defects as they arise. He has recently arranged for the repair of a damaged gutter and replacement of a worn classroom carpet. He and his team of cleaners keep the school in good, clean condition.
42. The school has good arrangements for first aid. Five members of staff have full certificates, and other teachers and assistants recently completed training in basic first aid. The school keeps records and notifies parents if there is an injury. The headteacher is the designated liaison officer for child protection. She works closely with local agencies. She ensures that teaching and non-teaching staff have training every year and are aware of the requirements.
43. The requirements of pupils with special educational needs are identified at an early stage. Their progress is monitored and appropriate action is taken to move pupils on the profile of special educational needs, sometimes reducing support if satisfactory progress has been made. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are well supported in class and on withdrawal

where appropriate. However, they are not always effectively supported in physical education lessons and their behaviour can become very difficult to manage.

44. The school achieves good monitoring of pupils' personal development. Teachers and assistants know their pupils well. They award red cards for a bad attitude or behaviour, yellow cards as a warning and blue cards for good behaviour. The school keeps all these cards in the pupil's file. Staff take care that pupils who behave consistently well do not miss out on blue cards. Progress in attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development feature prominently at the termly meetings with parents. Annual reports also review the child's personal progress. For example, a Year 6 pupil was reported as being 'an outstanding representative of Caslon, both as house captain and as a member of the teams'.
45. The arrangements for assessment, recording, and reporting on pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. Records held by the special educational needs co-ordinator are detailed and informative and provide a suitable profile from which progress can be monitored.
46. The school provides good support for pupils' personal development. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The school's strength in moral and social provision helps pupils to work together effectively as they learn. The last report expressed concern about the lack of opportunity for under fives to choose their activities independently. This is now a strong feature, all the way up from the nursery. Pupils have classroom responsibilities in all the infant and junior classes. They take part enthusiastically in sporting and musical activities at lunchtime and after school. More than 20 pupils come to the breakfast club each morning. This gives them a good start to the day and helps to improve their social skills. Year 6 pupils have a wide range of responsibility as monitors. For example, two monitors collected a compact disc needed for assembly during an interview between the headteacher and an inspector. They did this with politeness, and total determination.
47. The school keeps a close watch on attendance and this is working very well. Teachers feed registration details directly into the computer network. They do this swiftly, but still have time for a word of sympathy if a child has been unwell. The headteacher's assistant has taken over the system recently and she manages it expertly to show patterns of individuals and groups. This has a positive impact on attendance in several ways. She contacts parents who do not give the reason for an absence. She provides early warning to management if a pupil's attendance or punctuality gives cause for concern. Each week, she checks which class has achieved the best level of attendance. Pupils are very eager for their class to win. In the past, local factories operated a 'shut down week' at the start of September. The school has worked hard to show parents that the start of the school year is not the best time to go on holiday. This year, family holidays in the first half term have reduced significantly.
48. Procedures to improve behaviour are very good. The policy aims to ensure that the school values and respects everyone, and treats everyone fairly and well. Pupils know the school's system for rewarding good behaviour. They respond very positively to the awards each week in the achievement assembly. The school has guidelines for dealing with poor behaviour. Pupils respect the sanctions. The improved quality of teaching since the last inspection is having a positive effect on pupils' behaviour. Teachers manage their classes effectively in lessons. Assistants give high quality support in class and in the hall. At break times, the two play leaders build up pupils' interest by helping them to organise games. They make good use of the wide range of play equipment the school has

provided. Parents say the school is very effective against bullying and other oppressive behaviour. It reacts quickly and effectively against racist language or other harassment.

49. The school carries out its statutory duties with regard to assessment. Each pupil has literacy and numeracy targets. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are overall satisfactory, and procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory. Procedures for assessment are good in English, mathematics, science and religious education. There is an emphasis in most subjects on end-of-topic, half term, term or year assessment. Procedures for informal, ongoing assessment are developing in mathematics, religious education and design and technology. In English there are good procedures for assessing progress in phonics, spelling and reading. The procedures for placing pupils on the special educational needs profile are effective. Such pupils have good individual education plans with detailed targets, based on careful initial assessment and termly reassessment. However, there is a lack of a broad overview, for example looking at overall attainment in writing.
50. The use of assessment information is not taken into account sufficiently to plan lessons, to set targets to take pupils on to the next attainment target level or to record effectively the skills that pupils achieve across the curriculum. In English, reading assessment information is recorded and used effectively to develop basic reading skills. The use of assessment information is satisfactory in mathematics, religious education and design and technology. In mathematics, pupils' achievements are recorded against key learning objectives for each year. Teachers monitor curriculum coverage effectively. There has been good improvement in developing assessment procedures since the last inspection. However, the use of this information is developing quickly and will impact positively on standards as staffing stabilises.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Parents think well of the school. Forty-six per cent of parents sent in answers to the questionnaire. This is a high rate of response. All the answers are favourable. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents said the school has made considerable improvements over time. They particularly like the new computer suites and the Dudley Internet Link. They value the kind and caring ethos. A parent with a daughter in reception said, 'She bounces through the door every day'. There was concern from a minority of parents about activities outside lessons and homework, especially for the older children. Inspectors judge that the range of clubs and outside activities matches that found at most primary schools. However, the team agrees that junior pupils need more homework.
52. The school has very good links with parents. Class teachers meet parents every term to discuss children's progress. The school is a welcoming and friendly school, and parents also have the chance to talk informally with the teacher at the end of each day. Parents of pupils with special educational needs participate in reviews of their individual education plans. The school helps parents build their skills in helping children to learn at home. Ten parents, mainly of nursery and reception children, are currently taking part in an introductory course to develop early literacy skills. This runs with the help of a tutor from Stourbridge College and a member of the school staff. In a lesson seen during the inspection, the parents saw how their children learn phonics. They used sounds, gestures and saw the alphabet in a different order. In previous years, parents have gone on to qualify as assistants. Several now work at Caslon. Parents welcome enthusiastically the introductory sessions that the school runs in the computer suite. For some, this is their first experience of using a computer. Parents play a big part in the Caslon PTFA, which arranges fund-raising events. The funds pay for books and other resources that add

significantly to pupils' learning. Pupils join in events such as the spring, summer and Christmas fairs. These help develop pupils' social skills.

53. Parents get good information from the school. The annual reports on pupils are well presented. They cover in detail what each child knows and can do in English, mathematics and science. There are shorter comments on the other subjects. The reports cover the child's personal development. However, last summer's reports did not include personal targets for pupils. As the school's assessment system develops, teachers are discussing more regularly with parents at the termly meetings the learning targets to which their children should aim. Including the targets in next year's reports will give clearer guidance on how parents can help their child improve. The governors' annual report and the prospectus are clear and easy to read. Both meet statutory requirements. The prospectus has a flap into which the school adds useful information leaflets. These range from how teachers mark work to how pupils learn handwriting. The handwriting leaflet offers a helpful diagram for children who are left-handed.
54. Parents' contribution to their children's learning is satisfactory overall. Several parents come frequently to help children in class. A parent governor regularly hears Year 6 pupils read. This is valuable in helping them to acquire a wider vocabulary and higher level reading skills. Parents of younger children share books with them frequently at home and this has a positive effect on their reading. Infant pupils also learn spellings at home. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents of junior pupils were not clear about the school's homework policy. Several said that the amount of homework set varies from class to class. Most parents felt that junior pupils were not getting enough homework. Some parents do little to help their children at home. Clearer expectations for homework would help all parents support their children's learning more effectively.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The headteacher is a capable leader who has continued to provide the strong driving force behind all aspects of the school's work since her appointment in April 1998. She has managed the school well through a difficult period. There have been exceptional problems in recruiting and retaining teachers at a time when pupil numbers have sharply declined. The headteacher has ensured, with a marked degree of success, that the primary aim of the school, 'to provide a happy, secure, caring and stimulating environment in which children will develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically', has continued to be met. She has adopted an open style of management, which emphasises the importance of teamwork. This has been recognised by the recent award of 'Investors in People' status to the school. All adults in the school, including non-teaching members, are valued as an important part of the school team. One result is that pupils feel safe and secure and approach new learning confidently.
56. Senior members of staff provide able and committed support. The senior management team comprises the headteacher, deputy headteacher and three age-group co-ordinators. The impact of this support has been reduced by frequent changes of staff and it has been difficult in practice to delegate tasks. Frequent changes in the leadership of most subjects have militated against effective long-term monitoring of the work pupils undertake. In particular, there has been insufficient monitoring of the changes to the curriculum necessary as a consequence of reorganisation into a smaller number of classes.
57. The school has concentrated appropriately upon improving pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. There are good systems to monitor the teaching and learning in these subjects and to ensure that pupils continue to behave well. The school is aware that other subject leaders are not involved enough in monitoring their subjects to acquire greater

knowledge of the standards in all age groups. However, it is making good use of the expertise of particular teachers by arranging for them to teach other classes in certain subjects. Although standards in many subjects are low, given a period of stability the school is well placed to make further improvement.

58. The headteacher has a very good knowledge of the school's current strengths and weaknesses and a clear vision of the way in which she would like the school to develop. However, this vision is insufficiently communicated through written documents. The school improvement plan covers only the current year, restricting its value as a means of achieving the long-term management of change. This is because previous years' plans have been uncompleted, through unavoidable circumstances, and the school has concentrated upon immediate needs. Some of the school's priorities derive from the previous inspection report. Notably, the school has prioritised improving standards in English, which remain low. Other key issues from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed, but the need to improve attainment in music remains.
59. The governing body makes an active contribution to the smooth running of Caslon Primary School. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities diligently and is strongly supportive of the school and its staff. Many individual governors show high levels of commitment to the school, giving their time generously, for example. There are governors with particular responsibility for literacy, numeracy, special educational needs and personal, social and health education. Subject leaders responsible for these areas give regular presentations at governing body meetings, ensuring that all governors are fully aware of current practice and concerns for the future. There is less attention to other areas of the curriculum. However, a recent revision of the governors' committee structure now provides efficient monitoring of most aspects of the school's work.
60. The role of the governing body in providing strategic leadership for the school is underdeveloped. Governors are insufficiently involved in the formulation of the school's improvement plan. This is written by the headteacher with the assistance of her staff. Governors make modifications where they feel this necessary. However, their own good understanding of the school's strengths, and the challenges it faces, is not used to create a plan with suitable longer-term targets, which also reflects governors' aspirations. Similarly, the views of parents are not incorporated sufficiently into long-term planning and there are no regular procedures for taking pupils' views into account.
61. Administration systems are efficient. They enable teachers to concentrate on their primary function of promoting pupils' learning. In particular, the school makes very good use of computer technology. For example, class teachers rapidly carry out registration at the beginning of each session using their classroom computer, which is part of the networked system. Office staff have been well trained in computerised administration systems and receive good support from local authority staff. Financial procedures incorporate effective checks and balances to ensure that money cannot be misappropriated. For example, a different teacher authorises the payment of invoices from the one who signed the original order. A recent audit confirms that office systems are run correctly. The recommendations made by the auditors relate mostly to minor matters and have already been acted upon, although a few of the recommendations made after the auditor's previous visit were found not to have been carried out, such as the requirement to make an annual stock check.
62. There is appropriate financial planning linked to the school's priorities for improvement. Additional grants are used for their designated purposes and occasionally supplemented from other sources. Over the past few years, the school has achieved considerable success in converting a substantial budget deficit into a healthy, but not excessive, credit

balance. The finance committee of the governing body meets frequently and keeps a good watch on the school's spending. It has begun to use best value principles to ensure efficient spending, but does not yet sufficiently challenge existing patterns of expenditure or compare with costs in similar schools. For example, it has not evaluated the relative effectiveness of withdrawing pupils with special educational needs from classes for additional help, as opposed to providing extra help for them within the classrooms.

63. Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory. The school has re-established staffing to a satisfactory level. In the previous two years, seven teachers left the school. The reasons ranged from ill health to promotion of some skilled teachers. The high turnover meant that co-ordinators of key subjects, such as English and mathematics, had little time to settle. The situation has stabilised. In the week of the inspection, two classes were managed by temporary teachers. Teaching staff have a sound balance of skills and experience. The school makes good use of special skills. For example, the literacy co-ordinator (Deputy Headteacher) exchanges with another class teacher to take literacy lessons for that class. Teachers from the local education authority provide extra help with behaviour support and inclusion. The school enrolls the expertise of a music specialist to provide extra support when required. A number of parents have trained as learning support assistants. Their knowledge of the school and its environment enables them to provide effective help in class. The school gets strong support from its non-teaching staff. The caretaker and his team of cleaners keep the premises clean and smart. The expertise of the office staff provides a great deal of help with routine administration for teachers and managers.
64. The school has good accommodation. As a result of the reduction in the number on roll, it no longer needs to use the mobile classroom. It has adequate space for teaching those pupils with special educational needs. It has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. There are separate computer suites for infants and juniors. However, this has restricted the space available for the infant and junior libraries. The junior library is in a dark corner where it is difficult to display the books. There are attractive displays of pupils' work around the school. The school has good outdoor accommodation. Children in the Foundation Stage, infants and juniors all have their own separate playground. The field has a soccer pitch and plenty of space for pupils to play in summer.
65. Learning resources are good. For the past three years, the school has budgeted money to meet specific needs, and this has strengthened coverage across the subjects. The school has recently updated its non-fiction books and will extend its fiction stock during the coming year. It has a good supply of computers. The school makes good use of local places of interest. For example, pupils visit farms and beauty spots such as Wyre Forest, Clent and Telford Park. An annual day trip is made by Year 6 pupils to the coast, as part of their work in geography. These facilities add relevance to the curriculum, especially in science and geography.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To further develop the effectiveness of the school and continue to raise standards, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- continue to improve standards in English, mathematics and science by:
 - ensuring that teachers' planning always takes into account the ability of all pupils in the class;
 - setting clear targets for individuals and groups of pupils to further improve basic skills in literacy and numeracy;
 - providing more opportunities in science lessons for pupils to investigate and record their findings;

Paragraphs: 1,4,93,96,97,106,114,115

- raise standards in music and geography at 11 by
 - ensuring that all elements of the National Curriculum programmes of study are taught to sufficient depth in both subjects;

Paragraphs: 8,136,157,158,160,162

- make better use of assessment information to set individual pupil targets for improvement;

Paragraphs: 50, 97

- develop a long term plan for school improvement;

Paragraphs: 58,60

- improve the quality, quantity and use of homework for junior pupils.

Paragraphs: 29,51,54

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	12	18	19	0	0	0
Percentage	0	24	37	39	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 more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	17	193
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	58

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	66

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
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	9	21	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	2	2	8
	Girls	18	20	18
	Total	20	22	26
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	67 (70)	73(82)	87 (85)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	4	8	4
	Girls	19	19	19
	Total	23	27	23
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	77 (82)	90 (88)	77 (82)
	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	22	24	46

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	11	11	14
	Girls	13	8	11
	Total	24	19	25
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	52 (59)	41 (41)	54 (71)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	7	13	10
	Girls	11	12	11
	Total	18	25	21
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	39 (68)	54 (68)	46 (76)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
160	2	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
7	0	0
0	0	0
6	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
8	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
2	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)	10.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19:1
Average class size	21

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	68

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	92
Number of pupils per FTE adult	7:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2
	£
Total income	634,480
Total expenditure	605,287
Expenditure per pupil	2,233.53
Balance brought forward from previous year	1
Balance carried forward to next year	29,194

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 46%

Number of questionnaires sent out	230
Number of questionnaires returned	106

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	36	4	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	47	7	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	44	8	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	43	13	5	16
The teaching is good.	52	41	4	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	39	10	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	32	1	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	42	2	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	40	45	7	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	47	39	6	3	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	35	4	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	35	13	2	18

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

66. Fundamental changes have recently been implemented in the management of the provision for children in the Foundation Stage. Provision at the time of the previous inspection was judged to be unsatisfactory and a key issue for development. Improvements are now evident in the overall provision for these children. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and closely follows the government guidance for children in the Foundation Stage. The provision for children in the reception class is particularly good and changes implemented this term are already having a positive impact on the progress these children are now making.
67. The nursery and reception classes are organised as the Early Years Unit and managed effectively by a newly appointed Foundation Stage co-ordinator, who has responsibility for teaching the reception class. The nursery is currently staffed by two nursery nurses and an experienced classroom assistant. There is now joint planning between the reception class and the nursery classes, with good liaison between the two. Planning for the under-fives is based around the six areas of learning for children under five. The two well-qualified nursery nurses have specific responsibility for the nursery children.
68. The part-time nursery classes admit children of three and four years of age, most of whom spend about three terms in these classes, before moving on to the reception classes in the September of the academic year in which they become five. The arrangements to help new children settle into the nursery are satisfactory. Inspection evidence and the school's own assessment information confirms that the attainment of these children when they start in the nursery is well below the national expected levels in language, mathematical and personal and social development. This profile is currently maintained as they progress through the nursery, remaining still well below that expected of children starting a reception year in school. Nursery age children make good progress in their physical and creative skills and, by the time they start the reception year, their levels of ability in these areas are below those normally expected of similar-aged children.
69. The quality of teaching for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, but good in the reception class. Planning covers all the areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage in both classes. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Staff know their children well and clearly plan for their different needs, ensuring that learning builds upon previous knowledge. The recently appointed Foundation Stage co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and uses questioning well to assess children's knowledge and understanding. Staff make accurate assessments of children's attainment on entry to school and regularly assess the children's work. This ensures that tasks are set in the correct sequence and that they build successfully upon previous learning.
70. Both classrooms are well organised to provide a good range of activities, and the reception class provides a colourful and welcoming environment in which children can work. The nursery is less inviting due the overall layout of the room. Acoustics in this class are not good, with a result that noise levels can sometimes be quite high, especially when children are playing on the indoor climbing frame. However, the accommodation in the nursery is satisfactory overall and a big improvement on that at the time of the previous inspection. Resources are of good quality in both classes. The school has identified a need to further develop the outdoor area to provide an even more suitable play space.

Personal, social and emotional development

71. Provision for personal and social development is good overall. Many children enter the nursery classes with personal and social skills that are very underdeveloped. This is

exhibited by their very short attention span during times when they are sitting on the carpet listening to staff. Calling out by children is sometimes not corrected by the nursery staff during these sessions and this is limiting the overall progress being made by these children in these important skills. However, staff do provide a wide range of interesting opportunities for the children in the nursery and reception classes for activity in role-play areas, individually working with staff or sharing toys with other children on the carpet areas. The daily snack time is used effectively to encourage social development as children take turns to hand fruit round, while the others are encouraged to thank them. These activities ensure that nursery children are making satisfactory progress overall.

72. By the age of five, their personal and social skills have improved, but generally are still below that expected. These older children play happily with each other in the reception class 'home corner' or share equipment and toys with other children, but still find it difficult to listen to the teacher reading a story or conducting a short assembly. Some find it difficult to take turns in saying something in these teacher-led sessions, but the more mature children respond well to the teacher's prompts for them to raise their hand to seek her attention. These children are establishing positive relationships with each other and are learning to concentrate for a reasonable length of time, as seen in the way they are able to knead and create shapes with the play dough.
73. Reception children are becoming more confident in talking to adults. For instance, they are willing to enter into little discussions about their play in the class kitchen play area, talking about the vegetables in their basket or meal in their pretend lunch box. Sharing fruit has been established as a daily activity in both classes. This is providing a very good opportunity for the staff to talk to the children and the development of children's skills in sharing. Another good feature in both classes is that children are able to make their own choices about 'free activities', such as painting, drawing and playing in the home area, thus learning to form constructive relationships with each other and with adults.

Communication, language and literacy

74. Staff in both the nursery and reception classes provide plenty of opportunities for the development of communication, language and literacy skills. The overall provision is much improved and children make satisfactory progress in speaking, listening and writing. Basic literacy skills are taught particularly well in the reception class. As a result, these children are starting to listen more attentively to each other during discussions, and many can recognise and write their own name. Their speaking and listening skills are very underdeveloped, but some children are becoming more confident in talking to each other and adults. Most children willingly follow instructions and enjoy talking to support staff. This is especially so when staff work with them on the computers in the infant computer suite. Many children make good progress in their early reading skills.
75. Daily phonic activities in the reception class ensure that these children can recognise several letters of the alphabet by their individual sounds and letter names. Books are regularly taken home in both the nursery and reception classes and many children display obvious enjoyment when turning pages and sharing the pictures with adults. Good teaching of early literacy skills, such as holding a pencil correctly while tracing letter shapes, is providing a good foundation for future writing. A writing area in the reception class encourages children to explore these skills even further. Some children respond well by writing their own name and other recognisable letters on paper. However, by the time children complete their year in the reception class, many will not have achieved the early learning goals in this area of learning for children of this age, and standards will still be well below those expected.

Mathematical development

76. Due to the inspection taking place early in the year, much of the evidence is based on the aspect of number, although planning is effectively providing activities across the range of the curriculum. Few children have much prior knowledge of numbers when they enter the nursery and only a small proportion of children recognise number symbols or shapes.
77. Good, regular teaching of this aspect of learning is helping children to make at least satisfactory progress. For example, during registration times, nursery children are regularly asked to count how many are present. By the time they move on to the reception class, the most able can recognise and count accurately numbers up to 10 and can count a group of objects up to five. This level of ability is not shared by the majority of children in this class. Very few children write their numbers accurately, but good opportunities are planned by the nursery and reception staff to consolidate this knowledge. This is done through a wide range of interesting practical activities, such as counting up to three currants placed on a 'Ginger Bread Man' biscuit in the nursery, and making and counting up to 10 play dough biscuits in the reception class. The skills of adding on one are taught well by the reception class teacher. These children responded well to a game involving biscuits hidden in a box. Good opportunities for furthering the reception children's understanding of time are provided by the teacher through daily sessions involving the class calendar. This activity further supports the development of the children's speaking and listening skills. Such activities provide good opportunities for challenging the children's understanding of simple mathematical concepts while making learning fun.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

78. Provision is satisfactory overall and children make sound progress through a variety of experiences and practical activities. Progress is particularly good for reception children in the use of modern technology, such as computers, and in their understanding of the world around them by studying topics on common building materials and their properties as part of their topic on houses and homes. The younger children in the nursery gain a better insight into the world around them by experiencing a wide range of opportunities, such as feeling the texture of common objects and handling sand in the play areas. Role-play outside provides them with very good opportunities to build structures with foam blocks.
79. A very good level of display in the reception class confirms the breadth of experience covered during this term's topic on 'Homes and Houses'. Work ranges from wax rubbings of common building materials to investigations made on the speed a toy car travels on different surfaces. These children can manipulate simple animations on the computer screen with the mouse to create pictures. They display a sense of awe and wonder when they print out their pictures that they have created. Photographs of past activities include visits made to a local farm and local walks illustrating the breadth of children's experience of their local environment.
80. All of these experiences further enhance children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them so that, by the age of five, standards are broadly in line with those expected of five-year-olds.

Creative development

81. Provision for creative development is good and children are introduced to a wide range of creative experiences. Children in the nursery and reception class make good progress in a range of skills and, by the time they are five, most children have achieved the expected level. Children are encouraged to use brushes effectively to create colourful pictures with paint. Nursery children gain much satisfaction when using their hands to paint a large

table-top mural of firework night by applying glitter to the wet paint. They admire the results with pride before the tables are cleaned for other activities. Daily role-play provides good opportunities to extend the imagination of children in both the nursery and reception classes as they play out the parts of family life. Children in both classes enjoy singing songs. Older children sing in tune, maintain rhythm and try hard to maintain the beat by clapping, with their teacher's support.

Physical development

82. Provision for physical development is satisfactory overall and children make sound progress in this area of learning. Nursery staff provide a range of opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. As a result, children gain confidence and control in physical movement through participation in a range of suitable activities. For example, nursery children enjoy riding the large toys and building simple structures outside. They climb confidently on the indoor climbing frame, sliding down the slide with glee. They play with toy trucks and cars in the indoor sand pits and use a range of simple tools, such as scissors, to cut pieces of paper and cardboard.
83. The teaching of physical skills is good in the reception class. The teacher manages the children well in lessons and encourages them to use space effectively as they move around the hall. Apparatus is used effectively to provide appropriate levels of challenge and, as a result, most children can move along, balance on and dismount from benches and low level boxes in the hall with control. Opportunities are provided for these children to use the nursery facilities during the morning sessions if they wish to. At playtimes, reception children respond sensibly to the routines of the playground, being aware of the space around them and the needs of others. This helps them to work together in an effective and safe manner.

ENGLISH

84. Pupils' attainment in English is below the national average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 when compared with all schools nationally and similar schools. In the national tests in 2002, standards were well below average. At the last inspection, standards were in line with national averages by the end of Year 2 and below them at the end of Year 6. Despite this fall in standards, inspection evidence suggests that those pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress overall. A detailed analysis of standards in reading and writing of average and higher attaining pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 shows that their attainment is close to Year 6 higher attainers, suggesting standards are rising. However, a third of pupils in the school have special educational needs and, in Year 6, this accounts for almost half the year group, which reduces average scores.
85. From a very low standard on entry, pupils show good achievement in the acquisition of language for listening and speaking skills, reading and writing by the end of Year 2. Although achievement over the inspection was good, by the end of Year 6, pupils have made satisfactory achievement over time. Pupil population changes, previous poor attendance, staffing and recruiting difficulties, with accompanying turbulence over recent years, have been partly to blame for the low standards. Teachers sometimes find it difficult to teach concepts in the literacy hour, which are in some instances inappropriate for the skills levels of lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are too often withdrawn from lessons for small-group teaching.
86. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Using assessment information, the school has acted successfully to raise the standards of boys compared with girls and to identify areas of weakness in standards, such as in reading and writing.

Strategic deployment of teaching staff and action through the education action zone initiative have led to good monitoring practice, in-service training for teachers and deployment of specialist staff. Opportunities for developing a good range of writing, including a drive on poetry, have led to an appreciation of figurative language and reflective writing in the juniors. This sensitivity to the need for language development is promoting pupils' spiritual, social and cultural awareness well.

87. Standards of speaking and listening are below average for the majority of pupils by the end of Year 2. These pupils are improving their skills and a small minority can talk with assurance in a range of situations, use Standard English and adapt their speech to the needs of the listeners. The majority, however, lack confidence, speak briefly and have difficulty explaining things, for example about different kinds of puppets. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in this area of English. They listen carefully and participate in discussion, especially when encouraged by teachers to modify their vocabulary as necessary. Small group situations also enhance opportunities for the development of communication skills.
88. By the end of Year 6, overall standards of speaking and listening are below nationally expected levels. Higher attainers are increasingly confident and have a sound command of Standard English. The majority of pupils lack confidence in formal situations. In Years 3 and 4, pupils talk with increasing confidence about characters in books. By Year 5, pupils are learning to respond to each other's comments, for example when considering the effectiveness of instruction leaflets, 'I think he is right because.....'
89. Although the rate of progress made by 7-year-olds in reading is good overall, standards are still below the national average. This is because pupils start school with language skills that are well below average. Consequently, their readiness to read is hampered and, combined with a general lack of support at home, the rate of achievement is not sufficient to bring them up to average levels. The progress of pupils of different ability varies. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs enjoy books, but their overall progress in reading is slow. Higher and average attainers are developing good basic reading skills, are eager to read and do so regularly at home and at school. They use pictures, phonics and context to help read texts, and have built up a good sight vocabulary. These pupils can talk about the main events of a story with confidence. Although most parents hear their children read regularly, they rarely contribute to carefully kept reading diaries. The use of personal alphabetical notebooks by pupils to build up words for writing is a good feature.
90. Standards of reading by the end of Year 6 are below nationally expected levels for all schools nationally and for similar schools. From Years 3 to 6 pupils make steady progress overall in reading. By Year 6, higher attainers are at the national average, whilst average and below average pupils are below national standards. Girls' attitudes to reading are consistently good. Boys tend to enjoy reading comics and non-fiction despite a good choice of texts in each class and in the school library. Most pupils read with accuracy at their own ability level and can talk about aspects of the stories read. Average attainers enjoy talking about their favourite books, but only in a literal sense. Higher attainers can discuss character traits and draw information from inference. However, there is insufficient focus on reading skills such as scanning and skimming. Most pupils have developed good research skills for use in the newly-refurbished and computer-indexed library, for example using alphabetical texts, thesaurus and reference books for research. The Internet and Intranet are also used increasingly for research on topics in class. Very few pupils, however, are members of a public library.

91. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in reading and writing. They are effectively supported in literacy lessons by well-briefed classroom assistants. The special educational needs co-ordinator keeps an overview of progress towards individual education plan targets.
92. Writing standards are below national standards at the end of Year 2, although achievement in the acquisition of writing skills is good. By the end of Year 2, a few higher attaining pupils write in mostly simple sentences with the beginnings of use of complex sentences, using 'and', 'because' and 'when'. They use occasional full stops and capital letters and practise their writing in other subjects of the curriculum, such as writing about Jesus in religious education. They use word banks and simple dictionaries. Most pupils know word groups such as 'string' and 'cloth' and begin to refine knowledge to 'rope' and 'felt'. Lower attainers learn to write separate words independently, whilst average pupils write legibly without using punctuation
93. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress overall in their writing in a good range of genres, such as descriptive, argument, report, dialogue, autobiography and biography, as well as a range of poetic forms. Cross-curricular opportunities are used well to develop writing skills. This is especially so in religious education, history and information and communication technology. Poetry is often poignantly written. For example, one pupil wrote, *'Poppies are red to remember soldiers who died'*. Dialogues are drawn from personal experiences and are colourful and lively. Pupils are developing a love of words. For instance, a pupil of average ability in a lower junior class was astounded to find a wealth of words in the thesaurus to describe the sun. He then put the words to good use in his poetry writing. Although the development of content, grammar and spelling are good overall, the presentation of work and the punctuation of sentences have insufficient attention. The routine of checking by rereading and redrafting is insufficiently established and pupils are not effectively set targets to rectify these areas of weakness in their writing.
94. Although handwriting skills are well taught, and pupils join writing appropriately, the standards accepted by many teachers are not high enough. Often, pupils copy spellings inaccurately. Where teachers demand a high standard of presentation, work is neat, carefully underlined and handwriting well formed and regular.
95. Teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection it was good overall in both the infants and the juniors with no unsatisfactory teaching observed. These findings are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection. In the best lessons, teachers use questions skilfully in guiding pupils to critically examine instructions set against a list of criteria. Similarly, in the teaching of poetry, questioning guided pupils to reflect on poets' choices of words and to discover the imagery of metaphor and simile. Teachers make good use of whiteboards for pupils to jot ideas, individually and in small groups. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy the whiteboards because of their speed of use.
96. Teachers work hard and are effectively assisted by well-trained support staff. Although they plan literacy lessons in detail and differentiate for different levels of ability, there is evidence in Years 5 and 6 that differentiation of work in a number of lessons is insufficiently broad to meet the needs of the lowest attainers. For example, pupils in one lesson were unclear about the distinction between sentences and notes, whilst others had difficulty reading the class text and, therefore, were unlikely to be able to identify its features, in this case, non-chronological writing. Marking of work is positive and usually includes a development comment. There is, however, little evidence that pupils act on this advice. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is sound with good elements, such as speaking and listening and reading.

97. Although assessment of English has improved since the previous inspection, it is unsatisfactory overall. The procedures for assessment are satisfactory, but the day-to-day use of information to inform lesson planning is unsatisfactory. End-of-year assessment, baseline and non-statutory tests provide information for monitoring and evaluating pupil achievement, the setting of targets and taking action to raise standards. Diagnostic assessment of reading skills is used well to plan reading development and to decide who will benefit from the Early Literacy Strategy or Additional Literacy Strategy. However, there is little evidence of the use of assessment to inform teachers' planning. For instance, pupils' targets are not in 'child-friendly' language. They do not clearly indicate the skills that individuals need to acquire next in order to progress to the next level. The special educational needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants work hard, but independently, to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve their individual education plan targets. There is, however, no co-ordinated whole-school approach and these targets are not a regular feature in their class teachers' planning.
98. The implementation of the literacy hour has been successful, resulting in satisfactory improvement in pupil standards overall. A good range of writing opportunities is now provided for pupils and reading records are good. Teaching pupils in mixed-age classes in Years 1 and 2, and 3 and 4, is benefiting the higher attainers. This is especially so in Year 3, where standards being achieved are now similar to the majority of Year 4 and showing good progress. Teachers are also grouping the highest attaining pupils in Year 4 with Year 5 pupils in order to provide them with a suitable level of challenge in their work. Work is usually well paced with good use of pupils' work to exemplify and illustrate points. In the best lessons, teachers use time at the end to effectively review the achievements of pupils. However, in other lessons, the teachers do not refer to the original learning intentions but merely share pupils' work with the class.
99. The literacy co-ordinator has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning in English. For example, there has been extensive monitoring of teaching and improvement in staff training for teaching assistants through the educational action zone initiative. Improvements have also been made in the quality and quantity of equipment and resources for literacy to bring them up to a good level. Despite the good teaching of computer skills in the school, information and communication technology is under-used to promote literacy skills. Homework is regularly set by teachers, but only a minority of pupils return it to school. A homework club for literacy has been set up to compensate for this. This is effectively promoting skills, it is well attended by about a third of Year 6 pupils and proving to be very popular. A drama club is also providing pupils with opportunities to visit the theatre and visits by drama groups into school are enriching the experiences of all pupils.

MATHEMATICS

100. By the ages of 7 and 11 the standards reached by the pupils are below average. These results are not as good as they were in the last inspection, when standards were average. This is a reflection of the extreme difficulties the school has been experiencing in retaining a stable teaching force, through no fault of its own. However, there are signs, from pupils' current work, that show the beginnings of an improvement in standards, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6.
101. In the 2002 national tests for pupils aged 7 years, their results were broadly similar to the national average and to similar schools. This was an improvement from the previous year when results were about two terms of progress behind the national average. The proportion of higher attaining pupils reaching Level 3 was below average. For pupils aged 11, results in the 2002 national tests were below average when compared with the national

average and with similar schools. Following the last inspection in 1997 there was a sharp decline in standards. Since that low point, the school has worked very hard to secure a slow trend of improvement, in spite of substantial movements of staff both in and out of the school. There is no significant difference between the attainment and progress of boys and girls. Similarly, the results of minority ethnic pupils and for those who have English as an additional language are in line with the other pupils. However, the school does not routinely gather the information to make a clear comparison. In the 2002 national tests for 11-year-olds, pupils did not do as well as the other pupils in the year group. Overall, inspection findings indicate that the standard of pupils' work is below average. However, there is strong evidence of very recent improvements in pupils' achievements.

102. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress as they move up through the school in relation to their prior attainment, which is very low. The school's teacher staffing problems have significantly hampered efforts to secure better progress. However, inspection findings show that pupils' progress is good in those lessons where there is good behaviour and effort from the pupils and where teachers set work that is carefully matched to the levels of understanding of all the pupils. Progress is slowed in the minority of lessons, where incidents of poor behaviour interrupt learning and where teachers set work that is too easy for the more able and too difficult for the less able. In Year 6, the pupils can calculate 40% of £30 and they can change decimals into fractions. Not all of them yet fully understand how to place fractions in order by finding the common denominator. In Year 2, the pupils can count in 10s to 100. They know the odd and even numbers and they can name the common two-dimensional shapes. Some of them, however, struggle to calculate $\frac{1}{2}$ of 4.
103. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. They are supported by a committed team of well-trained teaching assistants, who encourage the pupils and help them to sustain concentration. This level of support is adequate, but would be even more effective if teachers consistently matched the teaching activities to the needs of all groups of pupils in the class. There are some instances where pupils are withdrawn from the classroom for special support. They would often make better progress if they received help within the classroom alongside their classmates, particularly when they can learn from the teacher's input and from the other pupils.
104. The pupils are often enthusiastic about mathematics and they show a good level of interest. In lessons where the teaching has a brisk pace and is closely matched to the pupils' levels of understanding, they progress particularly well. Relationships between pupils, their peers and teachers are very good. Pupils of all year groups work effectively in pairs and in groups. The pupils' attitudes, overall, are very good and the staff manage behaviour well, although there are some incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour, notably within the classes for Years 3 and 4 pupils. The best behaviour in mathematics lessons was seen in Year 2 and Year 6, where the strongest teaching was observed.
105. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Some very good teaching was seen in Year 2 and Year 6. In a very good Year 2 lesson, the pupils were working on halving and doubling numbers to 10. Throughout the lesson, the teacher skilfully questioned pupils to assess their current level of understanding and targeted her explanations to match individuals and groups of pupils. As the pupils' understanding grew so she raised the difficulty of work so that it was constantly at the boundaries of pupils' understanding. Consequently, the pupils made very good progress, they behaved very well and showed a great sense of achievement.
106. Pupils in the juniors are taught in ability groups. This form of grouping is helping the teachers to focus their teaching on the different levels of understanding among the pupils. Unfortunately, this has led to some teachers taking insufficient account of the range of abilities within mathematics groups. Where the teaching is most successful, for instance in

Years 2 and 6, teachers use a good range of approaches to ensure their teaching is finely matched to the learning needs of all the pupils. At the moment, this is not happening as well as it could in Years 3, 4 and 5.

107. Inspection findings show that the quality of teachers' marking has improved over the past year. Teachers mark the pupils' work regularly for correctness and to give praise and encouragement. Most teachers now go beyond this to give pupils clear information about how they could improve and what their next steps should be. This helps the pupils to focus on those aspects of their work on which they need to concentrate in order to improve. Teachers set learning targets for pupils as a whole, based on the work that is to be covered in a term. They now need to further develop this work to include individual targets for pupils to help them think about what they need to do to improve.
108. There is an adequate range of teaching apparatus and equipment and teachers make good use of it. For example, the infants place numbers on a washing line to help their understanding of place value. In the juniors, individual mini whiteboards are used effectively so that all pupils can be involved in attempting to answers to questions, and the teacher can readily assess the pupils' understanding.
109. Information and communication technology is making a positive contribution to the subject through the breakfast and lunchtime mathematics clubs for pupils in Years 5 and 6. These clubs receive full attendance from eager volunteers, who work on individual, computer-based programs that ensure effective steady steps in progress. This is certain to have a good impact on standards by the end of the year. There are further examples of teachers using information and communication technology imaginatively and effectively with some pupils but, in general, there are too few opportunities provided for pupils to work with this equipment in their mathematics lessons.
110. The school has an effective system for planning work for each term. This ensures the pupils experience work in all aspects of mathematics, including coverage of the National Curriculum and the National Numeracy Strategy.
111. The inspectors agree with parents that the provision of homework could be improved in the juniors. Pupils in Year 6 said they were set mathematics homework once a week, which took only 15 minutes to complete. Pupils were generally positive about completing their homework and parents are supportive of homework. However, homework is not contributing as much as it could to the pupils' learning in mathematics.
112. Mathematics is led and managed effectively, although there have been four mathematics co-ordinators in recent years. The post is currently vacant and being covered by the headteacher. The subject co-ordinator has produced a very good set of policies and guidelines to support and guide teachers and to ensure the subject is covered well. There are good systems for regularly assessing the mathematical learning in each year group, which are effectively used by teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' understanding. However, assessment is not yet consistently used by teachers to produce individual targets for pupils or to help to match teaching to individual needs.
113. Monitoring of teaching and learning has been limited in the past. This has prevented co-ordinators from knowing the strengths and weaknesses of teaching or being able to target help or guidance. Consequently, mathematics co-ordinators have not been able to help teachers to raise standards in the subject as much as they could. There are, however, adequate resources that are stored accessibly, either centrally or in the classrooms.

SCIENCE

114. The 2002 teacher assessments of pupils aged 7 years indicated that their performance was below average. In the 2002 national tests for 11-year-olds, results were very low. Only about half the pupils attained at least Level 4. Inspection findings indicate that standards in the current Year 2 and Year 6 remain below average. However, pupils are making satisfactory progress through the school because they enter the school with very low levels of knowledge and understanding. Standards, at least up to 2001, have improved at the same rate as standards nationally. At the time of the previous inspection they were below average and this remains the case, although gender differences noted then are no longer apparent. The school has not made enough progress in raising standards by developing skills and understanding through practical and investigative tasks, as suggested in the last inspection report.
115. Pupils in Year 2 achieve below average levels in most aspects of the subject, although their understanding of life processes and living things is average. Pupils' skills in scientific enquiry are below average. This is because very little attention is given to this aspect in the infant classes. Pupils make first-hand observations, but have insufficient experience of experimental work to enable them to record observations and measurements clearly or to predict possible outcomes.
116. Pupils in Year 1 name the major parts of the body and place pictures of a growing human being into the correct order. By Year 2, pupils recognise healthy foods and explain how our bodies are changed as a result of exercise. Some lower attaining pupils find it difficult to distinguish between living and non-living objects. Pupils name the parts of plants and know which conditions are required for growth. Their knowledge of materials and their properties and of physical processes is well below average. The way in which the curriculum is structured may account for this. Topics are studied in a two-year cycle and some areas of the subject are studied only in Year 1. This does not enable pupils to build on this knowledge and attain an average level of understanding by the end of Year 2. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress through the infants, but higher attaining pupils make less progress than they might because they are given exactly the same tasks as other pupils.
117. In Years 3 and 4, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in developing practical skills and scientific knowledge. However, many lower and higher attaining pupils fail to make enough progress. This is because teachers provide exactly the same work for all pupils. Lower attaining pupils struggle with tasks that are too difficult, often failing to finish written work because their literacy skills are inadequate for the task. Nevertheless, they show persistence as they attempt to complete work. Higher attaining pupils are unable to use their more advanced skills and understanding on activities at a higher level. Pupils with special educational needs make insufficient progress. This is because the good support provided in literacy and numeracy lessons is usually not available for science lessons that take place in the afternoon.
118. These problems continue in Years 5 and 6, though to a lesser extent, as these pupils are taught in single age groups. By the end of Year 6, most pupils have a poor understanding of methods of scientific enquiry because they have insufficient experience of experimental work. They have little understanding of how to plan and carry out investigations, particularly those demanding more sophisticated measuring and recording. Their understanding of fair testing is too limited. For example, most do not appreciate the need to repeat an experiment to obtain consistent results.

119. Attainment in other aspects of the subject is better, although still below average. Many pupils possess knowledge but only limited understanding, as their work has not been underpinned by enough practical activities. Pupils satisfactorily explain the basic function of the heart. They understand the life cycles of plants and the functions of their constituent parts. Most understand food chains, although some lower attaining pupils are confused between producers, consumers and predators. These pupils often lack the literacy skills to explain or record their work successfully.
120. Pupils understand that some processes are reversible, but have insufficient breadth of knowledge in this area. Consequently, they are unable to suggest practical solutions to everyday problems. They know that the solar system relies upon gravitational attraction to remain in place, but are unable to explain how day and night result from the way the earth spins on its axis. Their knowledge of electrical circuits is below the expected level. Pupils make too little use of information and communication technology in, for example, developing a range of research and reference skills. However, pupils are now beginning to use computers much more extensively for scientific applications and, in Year 6, it is likely they will achieve average standards in this area by the end of the year.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and there are many good features common to most classes. These include:
- good knowledge of the subject, which enables teachers confidently to provide clear teaching input;
 - good management and control of pupils in both theoretical and practical lessons, ensuring that interruptions to the learning process are rare;
 - a variety of approach to retain pupils' interest, with particularly good opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs or larger groups.
- A significant result of these features is that pupils are interested in science, enjoy the lessons and usually behave well.
122. More flexibility is required in timetabling science lessons. In some year groups, a whole afternoon is allocated to the subject. The pace sometimes becomes too slow when too much time is given to undemanding tasks and pupils lose interest. Significantly, one of the best lessons observed during the inspection was the shortest. A Year 6 teacher introduced a unit on electricity with a rapidly paced lesson on circuit diagrams. The purpose of the lesson was clearly explained and groups of pupils worked to complete a task quickly. The teacher subsequently made explicit to pupils the skills they had employed in achieving success and their progress in learning. The session acted as an effective 'taster', leaving pupils eager for the next lesson.
123. Many teachers are using their good knowledge of research into effective teaching and learning techniques, making pupils more aware of their own learning processes. Unfortunately, the approach is not yet used consistently throughout the school. This is demonstrated by the marking of pupils' work. Although comments and corrections relate well to scientific content rather than surface features of pupils' writing, they do not always indicate what pupils have learnt or point the way to future activities. Marking and other assessment procedures are rarely used to provide tasks at an appropriate level for all pupils.
124. The subject leader has appropriate expertise and carries out her duties enthusiastically and conscientiously, setting a good example as she teaches an infant class. However, a significant weakness is that she has had insufficient opportunities to observe science in junior classes and so has little appreciation of the standards being attained. The school uses the subject well to provide opportunities for pupils to write at length. However, the specific subject vocabulary that pupils require in scientific writing is under-emphasised.

For example, pupils are rarely asked to learn science spellings as a homework task. More opportunities need to be created to use mathematics and information and communication technology to support work in the subject.

ART AND DESIGN

125. The school has maintained its satisfactory standards since the last report. Evidence is drawn from scrutiny of wall displays, examples of art and from sketchbooks. Standards are in line with national expectations and satisfactory progress is made over time. Inspired by computer imagery, some pupils produce work of a good standard, contributing a large-scale portrait of the Queen, which gained a prestigious award in a competition among Dudley schools.
126. By the end of Year 2, pupils paint and draw closely observed portraits of themselves as they look in the mirror, having first explored portraits by different artists, such as Modigliani and Picasso, and discussed the work in relation to feelings in a personal and social education topic. They use sketchbooks effectively to practise and try out what they will produce on a larger scale. They use ready-mixed paint to colour the face, eyes and hair. After this dries, details are added with felt tip pens. Lower achieving pupils have a more outline approach, but those pupils capable of higher achievement have careful and accurate details of hair and detailed positioning of facial features. Using computers, they enjoy practising control of the mouse when exploring the possibilities of creating portraits and patterns.
127. Pupils in Years 3 to 6, study the work of artists such as Gainsborough and Picasso and family photographs in their study of portraying relationships linked to personal and social education. They use their sketchbooks to practise before going on to draw and paint, showing improvement in their skills to control paint and to work with finer brushes. At the end of their projects, they identify what they did well and what they might change. In Years 3 and 4 there are strong links between history and art. Pupils produce Egyptian style paintings of Gods. They are keen to use information and communication technology to create art and are beginning to use this skill, cutting and pasting work-enhancing illustrations for subjects such as history and poetry. Year 6 pupils have effectively used design and technology skills with art skills effectively to practise sketches, try out decorative patterns for containers and then to make them in clay as well as other mediums.
128. There is not enough evidence to judge the quality of teaching because design and technology is being taught in a block this half term instead of art and design. However, the quality of work available suggests that pupils respond well, pupils with special educational needs take a full part in lessons and that their skills develop satisfactorily.
129. Art and design is well planned to link to relevant curriculum subjects and topics, and makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development. Good displays of pupils' work reflect the value placed on them by the school and raise teacher expectations. In the corridors and entrance hall, murals in the style of Rousseau and Van Gogh, created by a local artist, help to make school an exciting and stimulating environment and set the standard for the pupils' work on display.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

130. Very little teaching could be observed during the week of the inspection. Judgements are based on the analysis of pupils' work, scrutiny of teachers' plans and the observation of some teaching in Year 2 and Year 5. Standards are broadly in line with national

expectations for 7 and 11-year-olds. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection.

131. Analysis of work on containers, completed by the oldest junior pupils at the beginning of the term, confirms that standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally. These pupils have constructed a variety of containers with materials, such as card, following the disassembly of several commercial packets. Displays in the classrooms confirm that the elements of design, making and evaluation are in place and pupils' evaluations reflect attention to detail and quality. This level of care and attention is further exemplified by a display of some beautifully made and decorated clay pots by pupils in Year 5. Teachers' planning confirms that there is sufficient coverage of all the components of design and technology and, as pupils progress through the school, appropriate attention is given to the teaching and development of specific skills.
132. Overall, the quality of teaching observed in the one junior and one infant lesson was good. In the lesson for Year 5 pupils, the teacher introduced a new topic based on the design and construction of a simple musical instrument. The teacher introduced a wide range of instruments to the pupils and good techniques were used to order these into recognisable categories. Pupils were allowed to investigate the sound-making properties of each instrument before considering how they might make a simple instrument of their own. Pupils in Year 2 were also introduced to a new unit of work based on making puppets. The teacher used a wide range of different puppets to stimulate the pupils' curiosity and imagination. This represented good planning for the development of an appreciation of form and beauty as each puppet was lifted out the bag in turn by the teacher. This produced gasps of wonder from the pupils as each puppet was explored in detail to determine how each could be used to bring a character to life. The activity produced much discussion from the pupils in how they might design and make their own puppet in the following lessons
133. A new co-ordinator has been appointed this term. The monitoring of teaching and learning in the recent past has been limited, but photographs indicate that the subject is given sufficient attention across the school and planning matches national guidance. The range of resources is satisfactory and there are sufficient tools available for junior pupils to use when making models.

GEOGRAPHY

134. Very little teaching of geography fell during the week of the inspection due to the pattern of teaching the subject throughout the year. Also, only a small amount of pupils' previous work was able to be seen by inspectors. However, from discussions with teachers and pupils, and a scrutiny of teachers' planning and some pupils' work, it is judged that the school provides a satisfactory geography curriculum for its pupils. All learning opportunities are accessible to all pupils, including those with special educational needs.
135. By the end of Year 2, the pupils reach levels that are in line with those normally expected of pupils their age. The pupils have enthusiasm and interest in the subject. They are beginning to know about the effects of climate on people's lives and on crops and they understand how land and sea are represented on a map. They are not yet able to locate countries or continents on a globe and are unsure about the points of a compass. However, teachers' planning indicates that these skills will be taught later this year.
136. By the end of Year 6, the standards reached by the pupils are below what is expected nationally. At the last inspection standards matched expectations. The pupils' attitudes to

the subject are very positive, although they sometimes confuse geography with history. They have a good understanding of the effects of climate on crops and lifestyle but an insecure knowledge of continents and countries. Their mapping skills are below average. Year 6 pupils are unable to recall much of their geography work from previous years, unlike their work in other subjects. This suggests that teaching is not as strong in geography as it is in many other subjects.

137. In a geography lesson seen in the lower juniors, the teacher was teaching about the continents and using maps, atlases and globes. The pupils showed good interest as the teacher discussed holiday destinations with them while they located the resorts on a map. The teacher presented the subject in a lively and interesting way, using a large, colourful modern map. This succeeded in capturing the pupils' attention. The teacher helped the pupils to retain the names of the continents by getting them to stand and use physical gestures while reciting the names. This was a novel but effective strategy for involving all the pupils and helping them to remember key information. However, the lesson lasted for two hours, which is very long. As a consequence, the pupils began to lose interest. They became restless and the pace of learning was slowed.
138. Teachers make clear links between geography and other subjects. For example, in a history topic on ancient Egypt the pupils learned about that country's location and climate. They gained a good knowledge of the countries that the River Nile passes through and the consequences of different levels of flooding. Geography also makes a positive contribution to the development of basic skills in literacy and numeracy through pupils' recording and their use of maps and measurements.
139. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator is relatively new, but she has good knowledge and experience of the subject. The plans for what teachers should cover in each year are sound and ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. Resources are adequate. Most are distributed around classrooms and some are housed centrally. Although the co-ordinator monitors teachers' plans, she does not yet observe other lessons to monitor the quality of teaching. Plans are in place to establish a system for assessment and recording in the subject.
140. The school aims for visits to be integral to the work in geography. Over the past year teachers have arranged for pupils to visit the Wyre Forest, Ashend Farm, Clent Hills and Birmingham. Field trips, such as the Year 6 excursion to Aberdovey, make a good contribution to pupils' learning in geography.

HISTORY

141. By the ages of 7 and 11 the pupils reach levels that are similar to those in other schools. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. This position has remained unchanged since the last inspection. This average level of attainment should not conceal that history is a strength in the school.
142. The quality of teaching in the infants is good. All pupils make good progress and their attitudes to the subject are exemplary. The teachers have a good understanding of the basic skills in history and they teach them in a lively way that captures the imagination of the pupils. The pupils are able to compare today with times in the past and they can place Florence Nightingale and Guy Fawkes on a timeline to show who lived when. They are developing a strong sense of chronology.
143. In a very good lesson seen in an infant class, the teacher used pictures, clothing and period objects to interest the pupils in the Guy Fawkes story. Her planning included details

of how she was to ensure that all ability groups were challenged appropriately. This ensured that all pupils made good progress. Through careful questioning she discovered the extent of the pupils' current knowledge and where the gaps were. The teacher skilfully explained, with the aid of a timeline, where the story fitted in relation to the birth of the teacher and World Wars 1 and 2. This helped to develop further the pupils' sense of chronology. The main part of the lesson consisted of the pupils dressing as the characters from the gunpowder plot and acting out the story. Following this, each character was questioned by the class regarding their motives, their feelings and the consequences of their actions.

144. Throughout this lesson, the pupils maintained a high level of interest and remained true to their roles. They gained a lot of factual information, a good understanding of the Guy Fawkes story, how the characters might have felt and where the story fits in history.
145. The quality of teaching in the juniors is good. The enthusiasm of the teachers coupled with the lively and creative way in which they present the subject is developing a love of history among the pupils. Teachers provide the pupils with a variety of source materials, which encourages the pupils to want to find out more and to develop their research skills. The older juniors have a good understanding of the sources of historical evidence and their knowledge of key historical events and figures is good. They have a good background knowledge of the Second World War and of social conditions in Victorian times.
146. Inspection findings show teaching and learning is of a high standard in Years 3 and 4. The culmination of a seven-week study of ancient Egypt was to assemble pupils' work as a school museum. This is a magnificent display of a wide range of research findings, writing, drawing, models and artwork open to visitors. The knowledge and enthusiasm of pupils in connection with the museum is outstanding.
147. The pupils speak with pride, passion and confidence about their museum. They know about hieroglyphs and how we have come to understand what they mean. They have made replicas of ancient Egyptian jewellery, clothes and toys and constructed models of pyramids. They have a good knowledge of the belief systems and burial rites of ancient Egyptians, including details of mummification and views on the after-life.
148. Teachers use resources very well in imaginative and interesting ways. Information and communication technology is used in some lessons, particularly for research on the Internet. There is scope for using this technology more in helping pupils' learning in history. The subject makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills.
149. The leadership and management of the subject co-ordinator are good. The co-ordinator has great enthusiasm and a good knowledge of the subject. The subject policies and guidelines are good. They embrace the requirements of the National Curriculum and ensure an appropriate coverage of history in each year group. Resources are adequate for the teaching of the subject. Currently, there is no system in place for assessment and recording progress in this subject. The co-ordinator has not yet been able to monitor the quality of teaching in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

150. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. The progress made by all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs or English as an additional language, is satisfactory in infant classes but is good in the junior classes. Pupils in the

latter are benefiting from a substantial allocation of time in the computer suite and consistently good teaching. However, the rate of improvement is limited by insufficient use of classroom computers to allow pupils to consolidate their new skills and to promote their work in other subject areas. Although the inspection judgement is similar to that at the previous inspection, the school has made substantial progress since then by planning a suitable programme in the subject throughout the school and by providing ample computers, in two suites, to implement this programme.

151. Most pupils in Year 1 require help in logging on to the computer and display average skills in controlling the mouse. These pupils use a program to record graphically their science work on human differences. Most Year 2 pupils have progressed to logging on independently. They categorise information correctly into visual and auditory. They obtain information from the *Living Library* program, choosing and clicking on icons confidently. Higher attaining pupils combine text with pictures as they label a diagram of the human body.
152. By Year 4, pupils have made good progress. They are steadily gaining word processing skills. They log on and enter *Microsoft Word*, change font sizes and styles and know basic strategies to save time, such as using the key to produce capital letters when this is quicker. Pupils are not yet familiar with the reason for red and green underlining when it appears on the screen. Their typing skills are at a relatively early stage of development.
153. Year 6 pupils display more confidence in using computers for a range of applications. They access a range of programs to find information, use the Internet and send and receive e-mails. They are learning to use computer technology to record physical data they have collected via heat or light sensors. Because these pupils have only relatively recently had the opportunity to progress at a good rate, there are some gaps in their experience that the school intends to remedy before they leave the school. In those aspects of the subject observed during the inspection, pupils have attained average standards.
154. The quality of teaching in information and communication technology is good. All teaching observed during the inspection was at least good. Teachers impart new skills very confidently to their pupils because their own subject knowledge is well established. Equipment such as the interactive whiteboard is used very effectively. Many of the lessons are comparatively short. This adds pace and urgency to the teaching, but occasionally leads teachers to adopt an excessively instructional style of teaching, giving pupils too few opportunities to interact and discuss. Sometimes, teachers limit questioning by asking only pupils who readily volunteer answers immediately. This fails to include reticent or slower-responding pupils sufficiently. Teachers are well supported by teaching assistants with considerable computer skills. The small size of most classes is an added benefit. It enables staff to circulate quickly to give all pupils support when necessary. The enthusiasm of all staff for the subject is evident and, as a result, pupils enjoy their lessons. They display very positive attitudes, often helping each other spontaneously, and behaviour in lessons is always very good.
155. Sometimes small numbers of pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn from lessons in the subject to receive extra support in literacy. There are no satisfactory arrangements for them to catch up with what they miss. The failure to provide a full curriculum for these pupils is unacceptable.
156. The subject co-ordinator, newly given this responsibility from September 2002, has a very good level of subject expertise, but recognises his need for further training specifically to carry out a leadership role. He is well supported by the headteacher and other senior

teachers in the school. He is aware of the urgent need to develop and implement assessment and recording procedures to enable teachers to match tasks more precisely to the ability levels of individual pupils. There has been insufficient progress in this area since the previous inspection. A good start has been made in using information and communication technology to develop other subjects, but the only use of the classroom computers observed during the inspection was for registration purposes. This does not represent an efficient use of equipment. There are suitable policies and safeguards in place to protect pupils from undesirable electronic matter, although the paperwork for these is unnecessarily complex and would benefit from a degree of streamlining.

MUSIC

157. By Year 2, pupils achieve the levels expected nationally for their age. By Year 6, standards in the subject are below those expected and pupils, including those with special educational needs, make unsatisfactory progress through Years 3 to 6. There has been little improvement since the previous inspection, when attainment was judged to be below average at the ages of 7 and 11 years. Standards are now better in the infant classes, but pupils are underachieving in all elements of the subject in the junior classes.
158. There are three principal reasons for below average standards in music. These are:
- the low profile of the subject in the school, partly the result of a justifiable concentration on raising standards in literacy and numeracy;
 - the failure to provide a curriculum that builds pupils' skills in each aspect of the subject in a rigorous and progressive way, and
 - teachers' limited confidence in teaching the subject, despite mostly adequate levels of skill.
159. At the age of 7, pupils recognise short and long sounds. They use these to create sound pictures, for example of sounds around the house, initially using their voices but moving on to choose suitable percussion instruments. Most sing with reasonably accurate pitch and respond appropriately to the varying tempo of music they listen to.
160. In Year 4, pupils have developed their sense of rhythm appropriately. They understand what is meant by *ostinato* and know that the words of a rap are spoken in rhythm to a musical accompaniment. Not all pupils are able to sing in tune because singing skills receive inadequate attention. By the age of 11, pupils sing with accurate pitch but not very expressively. They do not vary the dynamics as they sing and their articulation of words is weak. Other elements of performance lack refinement. For example, pupils' ability to play percussion instruments has barely progressed beyond providing sound effects. Few have experience of playing in parts or of polishing their performance after appraising their own work. These pupils have listened to a good range of music, including that from other cultures and periods of history. However, they lack the skills to describe or appraise this music because they are not familiar with the specific subject vocabulary they require to do this. They have an appropriate knowledge of the instruments of the orchestra and name some well-known composers.
161. The teaching of music is satisfactory and there were no unsatisfactory lessons during the inspection. In Years 1 and 2, teachers use appropriate resources and provide a suitably varied diet. They are enthusiastic and provide lively lessons. Consequently, pupils enjoy the subject, try hard as they sing, play or listen and behave well. These features are also present in some lessons for junior pupils, as for example in a lesson in which the teacher began a well-structured lesson by accompanying pupils on a guitar as they sang a familiar song in two parts. Throughout the school, teachers plan their lessons carefully, but occasionally their lack of subject expertise does not enable them to adapt confidently what

they have planned in the light of pupils' reactions. In such lessons, pupils occasionally display immature reactions and behaviour deteriorates. There is a tendency to plan lessons with limited musical content, to expect too low a level of performance from the pupils and to introduce and use too little technical vocabulary.

162. The school is very aware of deficiencies in the teaching and learning of music. It has found it difficult to appoint staff with expertise in the subject. The post of subject leader is currently vacant, with the headteacher taking over on a temporary basis. She has acted to improve provision wherever possible, for instance, by:
- using and referring to music in daily assemblies;
 - inviting the former subject leader to take part in music assemblies, although the brief duration of this weekly event does not permit substantial teaching to effect improvements in pupils' singing;
 - purchasing a new commercially produced scheme of work, covering all the national requirements, which is designed for non-specialist teachers to use;
 - making very good use of opportunities to bring visitors into the school, such as the Dudley Live Music Group, and to take pupils to musical events out of school. The school also benefits from the services of a visiting teacher of brass instruments.
163. The temporary subject co-ordinator has not yet had the opportunity to observe class music lessons. Although some recordings are made of classroom performances, it has not been the regular practice of all teachers to record in order for them and their pupils to evaluate the standards achieved. Assessment arrangements are at an early stage of development. Resources for music are adequate, with a suitable range of books, instruments and recorded music representing a variety of cultures. As is the case in lessons in some other subjects, there are occasions when pupils are withdrawn from music lessons for additional help with literacy. This further depresses the status of music and does not ensure that pupils are fully included in the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

164. It was possible to observe only lessons indoors during the inspection but, based on these observations, overall standards are in line with national expectations for 7 and 11-year-olds. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection. There is good provision for swimming for all junior pupils and most 11-year-olds can swim 25 metres by the time they move on to secondary school. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall in their physical development and control. Some pupils, however, exhibit challenging behaviour in lessons and, although this is managed well by teachers, the progress of some of these pupils is unsatisfactory due to their inability to concentrate on the skills being taught.
165. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some of it being good. This is particularly so in the infants and in dance lessons in general. Teachers dress appropriately for all lessons, setting a good role model for the pupils to follow. Most pupils respond very well to this, but a small minority of pupils forget to bring a change of clothing for lessons. However, teachers provide suitable activities for these pupils in the lessons, such as observation of their classmates performing their dance or gymnastics sequences. Teachers demonstrate a good awareness of health and safety, and good provision is provided in lessons for warming up and stretching muscles in preparation for physical activity. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to cool down at the end of their lessons. All teachers demonstrate good levels of subject expertise and this is particularly so in dance lessons. For instance, the teacher in a lesson for pupils in Year 2 used subject-specific vocabulary to illustrate what was required from the pupils as they interpreted well-chosen music to create dance phrases with expression. Equally good

knowledge was demonstrated in a gymnastics lesson for pupils in a class for Years 3 and 4 pupils. In this lesson, the teacher demonstrated balances with a high degree of control to the pupils. As a result of these high expectations, the pupils responded well with some effective and imaginative balances.

166. Many pupils respond well to these good opportunities for physical activity and their attitudes to learning are good. Several pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties behave in an unacceptable way for parts of the lesson but teachers manage this well, despite a lack of support staff for these pupils. However, time is needed to do this, slowing the pace of the lessons and limiting the progress made by the rest of the class.
167. Planning is good in lessons and there is a clear structure to each unit of work. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning through sessions at the end of lessons, when performances are appraised in a sensitive way by other pupils in the class. Teachers generally make good use of time and the pace of learning is quite brisk. When this is not the case, as in a dance lesson for a class of Years 3 and 4 pupils, there is insufficient time for reviewing the pupils' work.
168. Currently, there is no co-ordinator with the responsibility for managing the subject. Monitoring of standards has, therefore, been limited. There is a good range of resources available and the provision for outdoor activity is satisfactory. Opportunities for swimming are provided at a local pool and an after-school club is organised for advanced swimmers. An annual residential trip provides good opportunities for adventurous activity.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

169. Standards at 7 and 11 years are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Much work has been done in the past to improve the quality of teachers' planning and levels of expertise. This has ensured that the subject is taught regularly and all the nominated faiths to be studied are covered in sufficient depth. Junior pupils are making good progress and all other pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection.
170. By the end of the juniors, many pupils are familiar with several stories from the Bible and they can retell them carefully when they write in their books. Pupils demonstrate that their knowledge of Christian places of worship and those of other faiths is satisfactory. This is because lessons include a good range of work on all the major faiths, as required by the locally agreed syllabus. As a result, most pupils have developed a satisfactory knowledge of these faiths, such as Judaism and Islam. Good displays around the school, such as that depicting the 'Five Pillars of Islam', provide extra opportunities for pupils to learn about these faiths. Teachers make good use of the pupils' own religious experiences to support the teaching programme. The oldest infant pupils gain a good understanding of some religious beliefs through stories and discussions about important festivals. For example, the story of Rama and Sita was acted out as part of their work on the Hindu festival of Diwali. Teachers make good use of these occasions to provide opportunities for reflection on a range of spiritual issues contained in the stories told.
171. The quality of teaching is good overall and, as a result, pupils in the juniors especially make good progress in their understanding of religious issues. For instance, in a very good lesson for Year 6 pupils, the teacher effectively recapped on a previous lesson about Judaism. She then provided these pupils with a greater understanding of what constitutes kosher food through in-depth discussion and good use of visual aids. As a result of this very good input, the pupils learned a great deal, providing them with a better

understanding of the faiths of other people. Teachers use a good range of strategies to make the lessons interesting, as seen in a lesson for pupils in a class of Year 5 pupils. In this lesson, the teacher used a good range of techniques, including 'brainstorming', to consider the topic of confrontation. Pupils responded very well in small groups to this activity and the quality of their work was good.

172. The regular inclusion of lessons on weekly timetables is supported by detailed weekly plans stored very effectively on the school's own computer network. This initiative enables teachers to make sure that learning intentions are clearly identified for each lesson and any repetition in what is to be taught is avoided. Pupil assessments are planned for the end of each half-termly unit, the results of which are used effectively by teachers to inform the pupils' reports at the end of year. Scrutiny of pupils' books across the school clearly indicates that teachers provide good opportunities for the development of literacy skills in religious education lessons.
173. Despite the changes in staffing over the last few years, the new co-ordinator is able to build on the good work initiated by the previous post holder. She has a clear vision for the future development of the subject and has begun to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The curriculum is satisfactory and there is appropriate guidance, based on the locally agreed syllabus, to inform teachers' planning. There is an appropriate range of artefacts and the school has developed satisfactory links with the local churches. The school takes pupils to the local authority's religious fair held every two years, but the co-ordinator recognises that links with other faiths and places of worship are underdeveloped.