

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WITHYMOOR PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Brierley Hill, West Midlands

LEA area: Dudley

Unique reference number: 103809

Headteacher: Mr David Baker

Reporting inspector: Mr Alan Blank  
8358

Dates of inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2003

Inspection number: 246318

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Gayfield Avenue Brierley Hill West Midlands
Postcode:	DY5 2BH
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs H Hughes
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8358	Alan Blank	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19697	Janice Moorhouse	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes values and personal development. How well does the school care for pupils? How well does the work in partnership with parents?
18709	Nina Bee	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Art and design Music	
20695	Chris Kessell	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
3751	Trudy Cotton	Team inspector	Special educational needs Equal opportunities English as an additional language English Design and technology	
2818	Graham Warner	Team inspector	Religious education History Geography	
28882	Barbara Jones	Team inspector	The language unit	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Withymoor Primary School is larger than most primary schools with 337 pupils aged between 4 and 11 years. The attainment of pupils on entry varies from average to below average in different years. The background of pupils is largely white British. There are 18 pupils from ethnic minority families and, though 10 of these have English as an additional language, all pupils are fluent in English and do not require special support. The current figure for pupils eligible for free school meals is 7%, which is below average, though other socio- economic indicators suggest that the school is more appropriately placed with schools in the 9 to 20 % free school meals category. There are 50 pupils on the register for special educational needs (15%), which is about average, but a very high proportion (16) of these have formal statements of need. The school has a special unit within it, currently with seven pupils, whose special needs are in language development.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Withymoor Primary School provides its pupils with a sound education. Good quality leadership in the last two or three years has helped the school to improve and achieve standards that are generally in line with the national average. The quality of teaching is sound throughout the school and pupils make satisfactory progress overall. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils in the infants and lower attaining pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve well.
- The provision for pupils who have statements of special educational need is very good.
- All pupils make good progress in writing, religious education and geography.
- Pupils' attitudes are good, behaviour is very good and social and moral development are promoted well.
- The language unit enables pupils to be integrated successfully and they make very good progress in language acquisition.

#### **What could be improved**

- Some aspects of teaching could be further improved.
- Opportunities for some subject co-ordinators to monitor and promote their subjects throughout the school.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in February 1998. Since then the improvement in standards has been erratic but the overall trend is similar to that for schools nationally. Teaching has improved. School developing planning has been improved and is now good. All subjects have appropriate documentation to support teachers and assessment procedures have been developed and are now sound. The role of some subject co-ordinators is still not as effective as it should be. The overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, though the rate of improvement has accelerated in the last two to three years. The school is well placed to continue this rate of improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

There is considerable variation in the attainment of children on entry to the reception classes. The attainment of the current reception year group is average. In other years, such as the group of pupils now in Year 2, attainment was below average when they entered the reception class. Standards in Years 1 and 2 reflect this variation and results in reading, writing and mathematics have fluctuated. There was an overall improvement in results in tests in 2002 and current standards in Year 2 are average in English and science. They are below average in mathematics, but, given the pupils' attainment on entry to the school, they have made sound progress. Results in national tests taken by pupils in Year 6 have been erratic. In 2002 standards were above average in English and average in mathematics and science compared to schools nationally. When the results are compared to schools similar to Withymoor, results were above average in all three subjects. Current standards in Year 6 are below average in all three subjects compared to schools nationally. There has been a whole school improvement in writing in recent years. Pupils currently in Year 6 scored well below average in tests taken in 1999 when they were in Year 2 and so they have made at least sound progress and many lower attaining pupils have made good progress. The school is likely to exceed the targets for results in tests set for this year. Standards in all other subjects are at least average, but in geography and religious education they are above average and pupils make good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and concentrate well on what they are meant to learn. They are keen to participate in activities and co-operate well when working in groups.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are sensible and trustworthy. They understand the rules set for behaviour in classes and around school. They respect adults and each other. No children have ever been excluded from school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Adults are understanding and sensitive to the needs of pupils. Pupils respond well to the opportunities they have to take responsibility such as working as monitors at lunch times.
Attendance	Attendance rates in 2002 were well above the national average. Recent data suggest that this is being worsened by families taking holidays in term time.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	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 and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection. In one session in the Foundation Stage the teaching fell below a satisfactory standard, but overall it is satisfactory. In two-thirds of the lessons observed in Years 3 to 6 the teaching was judged to be good or better, which is about average for primary schools nationally. In Years 1 and 2 teaching is good overall; almost half of the lessons observed here the teaching was judged to be very good. Writing has been a focus for school development and it is taught well in Years 1 to 6 so that pupils make good progress. Pupils with statements of special educational need are very well supported by teachers and support staff who are skilled in enabling these pupils to learn well. Teachers plan well for most pupils and ensure that lower attaining pupils are catered for well in lessons. In some mathematics and science classes grouped by ability the needs of different pupils are not always met and work is not as challenging as it should be. Higher attaining pupils in particular in some lessons are set work that does not extend them so that they can achieve higher levels of attainment. Teachers' marking is often very good; pupils' work is corrected with care and they are provided with ideas for making their work even better. At other times opportunities are missed to help pupils to understand work more fully and provide information on how to take learning further. Pupils in the unit for language development are integrated skilfully into the main school and are taught very well so that they make very good progress in language development. Literacy is taught well throughout the school and is used well in a range of subjects such as religious education and geography. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory but there is room to extend its use in other subjects such as science.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The quality of planning has improved since the last inspection. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for pupils who have formal statements of special educational need is very good; they are supported well by staff and teachers and are fully integrated into school life. Provision for pupils with lower levels of need is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils who require special support and those who have English as an additional language make the same progress as other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for social and moral development is good and for pupils' spiritual and cultural development it is sound. The programme for personal and social education is fairly new, but it is well conceived and organised.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Procedures for child protection are good. Procedures for monitoring attendance and promoting good behaviour are very good. The school has sound systems for assessing pupils and tracking their progress.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is well led by the headteacher and he is ably supported by the deputy headteacher. The rate of improvement has increased since the appointment of a new headteacher who has taken decisive action and has a clear vision for the future. The school is managed effectively and efficiently.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. The school improvement committee has been very effective in moving the school forward. Governors are committed and they fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The erratic performance in national tests and the governors' response to an LEA appraisal has led to very careful analysis and monitoring of school performance.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are adequate and they are obtained only after careful consideration of cost, value and, where appropriate, after-care service. Teachers make good use of resources in their teaching.

The school has an adequate number of staff and a generous number of support staff. Support staff are very effective in supporting pupils who have special educational needs, but their deployment in the Foundation Stage could be developed further. The accommodation is good overall and facilities outside for play and sport are very good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school</li> <li>• Behaviour is good</li> <li>• Pupils make good progress and are expected to work hard</li> <li>• Pupils with statements of special educational need are very well supported</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework given to pupils</li> <li>• The information supplied to them on their children's progress</li> <li>• Co-operation between parents and the school</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons</li> </ul>

Inspectors generally agree with parents' positive views. The amount of homework given to pupils is about right. The quality of school reports to parents on their children's progress is good. The school has begun to survey parents' views and has the development of home/school links as a priority in its school development plan. The range of activities outside lessons is satisfactory, but the school is looking at ways to extend it.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1 The attainment of pupils on entry to the school varies significantly from year to year. The attainment of pupils currently in the reception classes taken as whole is average. However when pupils currently in Year 2 were assessed on entry to the reception classes their attainment was significantly below average. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress in the reception classes, which means that pupils enter Year 1 with attainment that varies between average this year and below average at other times.

#### **Years 1 and 2**

2 Standards in reading have varied between below and well below the national average since the last inspection, when they were average. Results in national assessments in 2002 were below average when compared to schools nationally and schools similar to Withymoor. Current standards are average. In writing there have been large, and to some extent inexplicably large, swings in performance from well above the national average in 2000 to well below in 2001. Such swings are unusual and are not fully explained by differences in ability within different year groups. In 2002 standards were average compared to schools nationally and below average compared to similar schools. Writing has been an area of special focus for the school and the progress made by pupils is good and in some cases very good. Standards being achieved by some of the higher attaining pupils in the current Year 2 are very high and overall standards are at least average.

3 In mathematics standards have fluctuated, but to a lesser degree than in writing. In 2002 standards were average compared to schools nationally and similar schools. Current standards in Year 2 are below average, but pupils have made good progress since arriving in Year 1. Results over time show that girls have performed less well than boys in mathematics and this is an area worth exploring in trying to raise standards generally. Results in science in 2002 were average in terms of the number of pupils reaching the expected level 2, but well below average in the numbers reaching the higher level 3. In both mathematics and science the number of pupils reaching level 3 in the current Year 2 is below average. Given the attainment of these pupils when they entered Year 1, their achievement is good in Years 1 and 2. Standards in all other subjects are average except in geography and religious education where they are above average. Pupils who have special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils because of the extra support they receive. Pupils who have statements of special educational need make very good progress.

#### **Years 3 - 6**

4 Standards were average at the time of the last inspection in English, mathematics and science. Since then results in national tests have generally been below average or well below average in all three subjects. In 2002 standards improved in all three subjects to above the national average in English and in line with the national average in mathematics and science. When results were compared to schools with similar circumstances to Withymoor, the results were above average in all three subjects. The progress made by these pupils since they were in Year 2 was average also.

5 Current standards in Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science. Targets for this year were much lower than those of 2002, reflecting the pupils' attainment

when they entered the school and results of tests taken by them in 1999 as Year 2 pupils. Results in these tests indicated well below average attainment in all three subjects. Even so, inspection findings suggest that the school may well exceed the targets set in collaboration with the local education authority. The number of pupils reaching the expected level 4 is likely to be close to the national average in English, mathematics and science. However the number of pupils reaching the higher level 5 is unlikely to match national averages, and so overall comparisons will be below average in all three subjects. In terms of achievement and progress, pupils have made satisfactory progress overall and some lower attaining pupils have made good progress. The progress of higher attaining pupils in science, though satisfactory overall, is not as good as that of lower attaining pupils and would be improved by lessons that provide greater challenge and harder work that builds more closely on what they have already learned. There is no consistent difference in attainment in science or English between boys and girls, but there is in mathematics, where the performance of girls is lower, reflecting the trend in Years 1 and 2. Pupils who have special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils, except those who have statements of special educational need, who make very good progress.

6 Standards in other subjects are average, except in geography and religious education where they are above average. Pupils make good progress because of a well-planned curriculum and good teaching in these subjects.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

7 Pupils' attitudes to school and to their lessons are good. They show an interest in what is being taught and they enjoy coming to school. They rise to the challenge when teaching is demanding and enjoy practical tasks. This situation has been maintained since the time of the previous inspection when pupils' showed interest and concentration in most lessons. Pupils' positive attitudes were noted in virtually all lessons and this enhances their learning.

8 Pupils in Year 2, for example, were motivated to work hard and with interest when interpreting information presented as a block graph in a lesson in mathematics. During a design and technology lesson, pupils in Year 5 worked with enthusiasm and enjoyment when designing a prototype for a buggy. Pupils are good at working independently and concentrating on tasks. Inspectors saw notable examples of these qualities when pupils in a Year 4 class were designing and making abstract images during an art and design lesson and in a mathematics lesson when Year 1 pupils were measuring the capacity of a variety of containers. A good example of boys and girls working co-operatively together, helping each other and taking turns, was seen during an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson in Year 1. Pupils were seen handling equipment and resources sensibly and confidently during lessons in art and design and physical education. The vast majority of parents responding to the questionnaire agree that their children like school and the inspection findings confirm their views.

9 At the time of the previous inspection, behaviour throughout the school was good. This situation has improved and inspectors saw consistently very good behaviour in the classroom, in the playground and in the dining room. The very good classroom behaviour has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The school promotes good attitudes and moral values and this shows in the way pupils are aware of the standards of behaviour expected of them from the time they start school. All pupils move around the school very sensibly even when they are unsupervised. There have been no exclusions from school during the last school year. There are no reported instances of bullying and pupils did not think it was an issue during their discussions with inspectors.

10 Pupils respond willingly to opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. The majority of pupils have responsibilities in their classrooms and for keeping shared areas tidy. Some classes have a rota of 'class helpers' and all, including the youngest children, have an opportunity to be register monitor. Older pupils have duties and responsibilities around the school and pupils' good sense of responsibility is carried through into the quality of their work. Responsibilities include acting as play leaders with younger pupils during lunchtimes, organising the use of playground equipment and showing visitors around the school. Pupils take these responsibilities seriously and handle them reliably and efficiently. These responsibilities make an important contribution to pupils' social and moral development. When talking to pupils, inspectors found them to be polite, friendly and interesting. Pupils are confident making decisions, and are quick to use their initiative when working in small groups and discussing tasks. Pupils in Year 2 spontaneously cheered and applauded the efforts and successes of others in a physical education lesson. Pupils in Year 1 spoke confidently when explaining situations that made them angry and all listened intently to the ideas and opinions of others. In religious education lessons, pupils develop their own beliefs and faith well by listening carefully and maturely. Pupils in Year 1, for example, gave thoughtful answers to questions on the meaning of 'fair play'.

11 Relationships in the school are very good, and enable pupils to develop an understanding of what the school expects from them. Pupils form very close relationships with each other, with teachers and with other adults. They show considerable respect for the feelings and values of others and incidents of unkind behaviour between pupils are rare. Inspectors saw kind and caring attitudes between pupils of the same age and between older and younger pupils. Pupils work and play together very well, in groups and pairs. This was seen during lessons in English and art and design and during playtimes.

12 At the time of the previous inspection attendance was good. Attendance is now very good with figures higher than those of other primary schools nationally. The number of unauthorised absences is similar to the national figure. Figures in the present school year have been affected by a significant number of families who take their children on holiday during term time, despite the school's best efforts to dissuade them. However, the majority of pupils are keen to come to school and are generally punctual. This enables lessons to start on time and the school day to get off to a good start.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

Quality of teaching	1998	2003
Very good or better	11%	16%
Satisfactory or better	88%	99%
Unsatisfactory	12%	1%

13 The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection as the table above shows. The proportion of very good teaching has increased and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen significantly. In 30 of the 74 lessons (41%) observed teaching was good during the current inspection. This proportion was not formally noted in the inspection in 1998. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the school, but in Years 1 and 2 it is consistently good and in 8 of the 20 lessons observed in these year groups teaching was very good. This is reflected in the good progress made by pupils in these year groups.

14 Teaching is satisfactory overall in the Foundation Stage. The management of children is sound in most situations. Adults generally expect the children to behave well but occasionally allow them to talk or begin to move to another activity whilst they are giving out

information or instructions. Sometimes, when adults interact with the children, opportunities are missed to reinforce skills and knowledge or develop vocabulary. Planning is satisfactory but sometimes work is not accurately matched to the needs of all children because previous lessons have not been evaluated effectively.

15 Teachers make good use of resources generally. For instance in ICT they use projectors to demonstrate to the whole class how to use the computer. In two lessons observed in Year 3, teachers explained how to use computers to edit work so that pupils learned techniques quickly and effectively. In another lesson, the teacher used white boards for pupils to write down ideas or to draft work in English. In Year 5, pupils were encouraged to write down slogans to support arguments against hunting as a sport. In a science lesson in Year 6, the teacher used a projection microscope with a laptop computer to look at fibres as pupils worked as forensic scientists. Teachers prepare lessons well. Equipment is gathered in plenty of time and recording sheets are thoughtfully constructed and presented. For instance, in a Year 2 science lesson, pupils looking at materials and classifying them had hand lenses and protective goggles to help them, whilst the recording sheets reflected the different abilities in pupils' writing.

16 There is consistent approach within year groups and parallel classes usually receive identical or very similar lessons. In some year groups teachers swap classes to exploit their own teaching strengths. In literacy and numeracy, part-time teachers are deployed to ensure that pupils are taught in sets that only have one year group in them and these sets are often smaller than the normal classes. The work in some sets does not reflect the different abilities as well as it might and teachers do not always deliver lessons that match the varying abilities within the sets and as a result some pupils are not challenged sufficiently; the work is not hard enough for them and they do not achieve as well as they might. This is more often the case with higher attaining pupils. Generally speaking lower attaining pupils are catered for well. Pupils who have statements of special educational need are very well supported and they learn very well, but other pupils who have special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils in their year groups. There is significant evidence that the effort put into the teaching of writing is resulting in higher standards and better learning by pupils. In Year 2 the high expectations of teachers has resulted in some work of very high standard. This is also true in science.

17 Though teachers assess pupils regularly they do not always use the information gained from this assessment to plan subsequent lessons and sometimes very similar work is repeated, for instance in science. The quality of teachers' marking varies from very good to cursory ticking. Where marking is very good, pupils are provided with explanations and ideas on how to improve their work. The use made of day-to-day assessment in planning future work and individual targets for pupils' learning is limited. Where teaching is very good, work is prepared that challenges all pupils in both sets and classes, pupils are highly motivated and teachers skilfully ensure that their expectation for pupils' learning are realised. For example in a Year 2 literacy lesson pupils worked on 'tongue twisters' in order to develop ideas about alliteration. They explored ideas of rhyme and syllables and produced phrases such as '*Thomas Turner took a taxi*' in a lesson that had a real sense of fun.

18 Teachers' management of pupils is good and the very good relationships between staff and pupils make classrooms harmonious and purposeful places. Literacy is taught well and teachers use the skills in a variety of other subjects such as geography and religious education well. Numeracy is taught soundly but there is room to increase its use across the curriculum forging more links with science and ICT. Though some parents were dissatisfied with the amount of homework given to children, the judgement of the inspection team was that teachers used homework appropriately.

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

19 The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Activities are soundly planned according to the national guidance. There are weekly opportunities for physical development in the hall but too few opportunities for structured outdoor play. Resources are satisfactory to support all areas of learning inside but the outside area lacks opportunities for climbing and balancing.

20 The school's curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and provision for religious education. This is an improvement on the previous inspection where weaknesses were identified in the quality and usefulness of subject documentation in providing a clear policy, good guidelines and schemes of work. Due consideration is made for the mixed- age classes found in parts of the school and a 'rolling programme' of topics ensures that pupils do not cover the same areas of learning again. This has been particularly successful in geography, history and religious education.

21 Support for pupils with special educational needs is provided mainly within classrooms, where pupils follow the same curriculum as other pupils. When the school puts pupils into ability sets in literacy, numeracy and science, individual targets for these pupils are not always at hand for teachers taking the sets. Most learning support assistants (LSAs) focus their help on pupils who have special educational needs and their work with pupils who have statements of need is particularly effective in enabling them to learn well and be fully involved in school life. On some occasions, pupils with lower levels of need work in small groups outside classrooms and this is effective in developing basic skills in reading and writing.

22 The school has recognised the importance of pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) with the co-ordinator for this area of learning developing a new comprehensive scheme that can be taught either as a discrete subject or as part of the normal curriculum. For example, the school participates in the National School Fruit Scheme for pupils in reception and Years 1 and 2. This encourages the younger pupils to eat more fruit and the 'fruit breaks' are successfully used by teachers to develop the pupils' personal, social and health education. Year 2 pupils were observed sensibly discussing the differences between people after listening to 'A Clever Invention' by Thelma Page that focuses on a boy with hearing difficulties. Although the school policy for PSHE is relatively new, in principle it provides the school with a focus to promote citizenship, sex education, drugs awareness and race equality.

23 The implementation and priority given to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has begun to make a positive impact on teaching and learning. Because of the school's most recent priorities, the basic skills associated with literacy are better promoted across the wider curriculum than numeracy. Teachers feel confident with the strategies that help them to develop a consistent approach to teaching the curriculum. However, although the computer suite is used appropriately to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in information and communication technology (ICT), the subject could be used more extensively to support other areas of the curriculum.

24 The range of activities outside formal lessons is satisfactory although 26 per cent of parents disagreed that the school provides an interesting range of these activities when responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Year 6 pupils talked very positively about the opportunities to take part in dance, cricket, basketball and netball clubs after school and to compete against other schools in sports such as football and athletics. These activities, as well as visits out of school and visitors to the school, successfully enrich the curriculum.

25 Relationships with partner institutions are satisfactory overall. Links with the pre-school group, who share the school building, are very good. The facility provides an important link between local families and the school and is helping to stabilise admission numbers and familiarise children with the school before they attend the reception classes. Appropriate induction procedures are in place for pupils moving on to secondary education and links with a local Beacon School<sup>1</sup> have enabled the school to share experiences and best practice particularly in terms of raising standards and developing the role of the subject co-ordinator. The school is used extensively by the local community for a range of activities which are managed by the Community Association. The school's links with the local and wider community, including the local church, are satisfactory and contribute to pupils' learning. A developing link with a local financial software company is in its early stages but has enormous potential for the school in terms of providing adult support.

26 There is good provision for moral and social development. The provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory though some opportunities to improve this provision are not fully exploited.

27 Spiritual development of pupils is tied very closely to provision made in assemblies. A whole range of assemblies was observed during the inspection week because the school has an interesting pattern of class, phase and whole school assemblies during the week. A monthly achievement assembly is included in this pattern but parents are not invited to this because of lack of space in the one school hall. This is a missed opportunity for the school to show parents the good work being done by their children, both academically and socially. In assemblies observed there was a lack of consistency in the way that they developed pupils' spiritual knowledge and understanding. Sometimes pupils entered the hall for phase assemblies to music that was not referred to and at other times there was no music at all. Prayers always reflected the theme for the week, which was 'Perseverance'. This theme was an appropriate one that could be given effective consideration by all age groups because of the care taken by staff leading the assembly focus. Stories of famous people's lives were illustrated with photographs on the large screens, which focused and held pupils attention. The most successful assembly observed was led by an ex-pupil now attending university who is an accomplished flautist. This accomplishment was initiated at Withymoor Primary School where she first began to play the flute. Although it was a difficult instrument at first the perseverance shown in learning to play it obviously now gave much pleasure as well as skill. Opportunities to develop spiritual elements in other subjects such literacy are not fully exploited or identified in teachers' planning.

28 Provision for moral development is better because the school has clear ideas about how it wants its pupils to become responsible citizens of the future. Pupils are generally well behaved in all of the school's activities because the systems demand a respect for others. The rewards to be obtained are a major focus for the pupils in both their play and work. In the early years, a sticker system on cards is rewarded with special pencils that are much coveted. This is all part of the Golden Rules that clearly declare what the school wants the pupils to achieve. It is continued in the junior classes where rewards remain the backbone of the school's systems. Pupils gather points over a period of time and when achievements are good enough, they are awarded special prizes, such as toys. This has brought much encouragement for the system from parents. Equally there are sanctions in place but the school records show there is little use of these. There is a definite structure that is well known where class teachers deal with any difficulties and the headteacher and parents are only involved as a last resort.

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<sup>1</sup> Schools awarded Beacon status communicate and share good practice with other schools to raise standards.



29 The provision for social development is good. Apart from the opportunities created by teachers to work in a variety of paired, small group and whole class activities as part of their lessons, they also take up many other chances to learn together. A number of extra-curricular activities help pupils to work cohesively as teams. Expertise provided through the local authority focus on particular sports such as cricket. Pupils from Year 2 upwards take part in a dance club led by a visiting teacher that gives a professional edge to their learning. Musical activities such as the choir and recorder club help to bring the pupils together in larger groups to learn to work together harmoniously.

30 Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. There is some considerable emphasis given to the pupils' own culture and local history. Work on the Delph Locks as part of a large scale British Waterways project on the development of canal locks gave pupils knowledge and understanding of how their local culture grew around the use of canals as a major form of transport. Visits to many other places locally, such as the Black Country Museum and Selly Manor, reinforce pupils' understanding. International links have been made through e-mail contact with children in Japan and the USA. Although the school reading scheme has been revised, with consideration given to the introduction of characters from multi-ethnic groupings, this is only an initial step in introducing pupils to the cultures of a wider range of ethnic groups. Another initiative to develop pupils' understanding has been the work with a local Asian artist to create very striking, colourful wall banners in the hall.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

31 Withymoor Primary School takes good care of its pupils. The school's atmosphere is supportive and happy and makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. The school has guidance and welfare policies to guide and underpin its actions. These policies are implemented consistently across the school. The procedures for child protection are satisfactory and all staff are aware of the procedures. There is evidence of thorough and careful monitoring by the deputy headteacher and the school has a good awareness of the needs of its pupils and their parents. All staff, including the teaching assistants and the midday supervisors, have had recent training in child protection procedures. Good relationships exist with outside agencies involved in the care of pupils. The school has nine members of staff qualified in first aid and two extra staff at lunch times, although there is a need for staff to refresh their basic first aid training. All the necessary procedures are in place for dealing with minor accidents or incidents. Arrangements and procedures for the conduct of educational visits comply with local authority guidelines. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy and regular health and safety audits are carried out. The school has clear policies for ensuring the safe and sensible use of the Internet. Supervision at lunchtime is organised well by the ten supervisors, a number of whom are employed in the school in other roles. Lunchtime staff are fully involved with implementing the school's behaviour policy and praise pupils for good manners, talking quietly and being helpful. Pupils treat supervisors with politeness and courtesy. With the help of older pupils, supervisors manage the distribution and use of the popular playground equipment. Lunchtime is a happy and orderly occasion that makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

32 There has been a decrease in attendance during the current school year, due mainly to some parents taking holidays in term time. The school expects pupils to attend regularly and the headteacher and school's secretary maintain the very good attendance procedures and systems conscientiously. Through clearly written letters and reminders in the school's newsletter, parents are regularly informed of the need for good attendance and punctuality.

33 The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The school gives a very high priority to the expectation of a good standard of behaviour.

Pupils and parents are aware of the standards of behaviour that are expected and which are consistently applied by teachers and other adults working in the school.

34 At the time of the previous inspection the use of assessment procedures to inform planning was criticised. The school has worked hard in this area and made satisfactory progress. Assessment procedures are satisfactory in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are regularly assessed in these subjects. However there are no consistent procedures for target setting for groups or individuals within the school. Although there are some targets in English and mathematics they are not often referred to in lessons or the marking of pupils' work and pupils are not always sure of them. The process of target setting is relatively new. Pupils' progress is tracked to show the National Curriculum levels that pupils reach in English and mathematics. In other subjects the co-ordinators are at various stages of developing assessment procedures that link in with the guidelines for each subject to ensure that teachers can easily see how pupils are doing as they move through the school.

35 The progress of pupils who have special educational needs is monitored closely, especially those who have statements of need. Better use could be made of pupils' individual learning plans when they move to ability sets in literacy, numeracy and science.

36 Teachers have begun to predict National Curriculum levels and track pupils' progress as they move through the school. Performance information is carefully analysed and used to track cohorts of pupils and to place individuals into ability sets for English and mathematics. This then enables teachers to move individuals and groups of pupils on to the next stage of learning more easily. These systems are an improvement since the previous inspection. However the use of this information is inconsistent because in some lessons teachers do not match work accurately to the needs of all pupils. This hinders the learning within lessons and ultimately the progress which some pupils make overtime.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

37 The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and has continued to build on the useful partnership that it had at the time of the last inspection. The parents' opinions of the school are generally positive although there are areas of some dissatisfaction. The majority of parents responding to the questionnaire agree the school works closely with them. However, a significant number disagree with this statement and the school could usefully investigate the reasons for this dissatisfaction. Parents receive information of good quality that is useful and comprehensive. They receive frequent letters presented in a readable and informative style. The very well presented school brochure is very detailed and is given to all new parents and re-issued to parents when their children go into Year 3. Newsletters, sent home once a month, are attractively presented and produced by the school's secretary. They include useful information on school events and parents' consultation meetings as well as information on how parents can become involved in their children's learning. The contribution of parents to pupils' learning is satisfactory both in school and in the work pupils do at home. The school is working hard at involving parents more in their children's education. A small but loyal group of parents help in the school on a regular basis. They help in classrooms as 'reading buddies', with swimming lessons and with the re-organisation of the school's library. The parent and teacher association organises a number of well-supported fund-raising activities throughout the year that benefit pupils by providing additional resources and special treats. Money raised has been used to purchase equipment and enhance the school's indoor and outdoor environment.

38 The majority of parents responding to the questionnaire felt well informed about how their children are getting on at school. A significant number of parents disagreed with this statement. Again, the school could usefully investigate the reasons for this dissatisfaction. There are two formal parents' consultation evenings each year and attendance at these

meetings is good. Before the consultation evenings, parents are invited to an open day to see children at work and share work with their children. For parents who wish to discuss their children's report formally with the class teacher, there is an opportunity to do so at the end of the summer term. The first parents' meeting held in early October enables teachers to provide useful information on what children will be doing throughout the year. Pupils' annual reports present a thorough and systematic record of their progress and useful information on their personal and social development. Reports contain targets for the next year in each subject and suggestions on ways in which parents can help with targets at home. The arrangements for the setting of homework and the types of tasks pupils may be expected to do at home are usefully given to parents at the first open meeting in October. Inspectors saw good practice of homework being set in line with the policy and good examples of homework being checked and marked by the class teachers.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

39 The current headteacher has been in post for approximately 18 months and has demonstrated good leadership, providing a clear direction for the school after a period of relative instability in senior management. The headteacher has analysed school performance and prioritised elements for development. High on the list has been improving standards in writing throughout the school and this emphasis has already begun to take effect. The school has begun to experiment with setting in the subjects of English, mathematics and science and results in 2002 were encouraging, though the effectiveness of this strategy is still under consideration in science. The headteacher has been very well supported by the deputy headteacher who led the school successfully until the current appointment was made. With governors, she led the way to developing the pre-school group that is housed within the school and now provides a successful pre-school learning experience for prospective pupils. The senior management team provides a useful means of communication between school managers and other staff; it also provides opportunities for ideas to be discussed and refined before they are shared with the wider staff and school community.

40 Governors reacted quickly during the period of instability in leadership forming a school improvement committee that has driven school improvement since 2000. Governors carried out a rigorous appraisal of the problems they faced during this time and are justifiably pleased with the improvements that they now see taking place and a school that is improving. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses; they keep a close eye on standards and monitor spending carefully. The relationship between governors and the senior management team is good. They are critical but supportive and there is a shared vision of the way forward. The capacity for the school to continue to improve is good. Governors look for value in their spending decisions. For instance in the replacement of guttering, by obtaining several quotations they were able to save substantial funds and look for other improvements to the building. There is a race equality policy that reflects the school's overall approach to including all pupils and ensuring that their individual needs are catered for. This is particularly strong in respect of pupils who have statements of special educational needs and those pupils who attend the language unit.

41 At the time of the last inspection one of the key issues was to develop the role of subject co-ordinators. Whilst this has been achieved in some subjects such as English and geography, other co-ordinators do not have a sufficiently clear view of the their subject throughout the school. Co-ordinators require greater opportunity to monitor pupils' work in all classes on a regular basis so that they can see how subjects are being taught throughout the school and how pupils progress. Co-ordinators would also benefit from opportunities to work alongside colleagues developing teaching and sharing skills.

42 The evaluation of school performance is carried out as part of the overall school improvement plan. This is well conceived, improvements and strategies are defined clearly and costed with relevant measures of success identified. The plan is very much a working document that drives school improvement.

43 The school runs smoothly. The office staff are efficient and competent and they provide a warm welcome to visitors. The use of computers to record pupils' attendance is very effective as is the use of laptop computers for teachers' planning.

44 Leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs is sound with many strong features. The management of the provision for pupils with statements is very good and the management of provision overall is good. In the time allocated to the role, the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has achieved a significant amount of change and the school has responded well to the recent changes in the Code of Practice. The governor for special educational needs is very well informed and aware of the support provided by the school. A recent audit of provision has led to much earlier identification of children's needs. The close working relationship of the SENCO and learning support assistants is a strength.

45 The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory. Several teachers are able to use their subject expertise and experience in developing their role as curriculum co-ordinator. The school has no formal induction procedures for new staff and recognises that this is an area for development. The induction of newly qualified teachers follows the programme developed by the local education authority. The school places significant emphasis on the professional development of support staff. They are actively encouraged to attend training courses and will eventually be part of the school's performance management strategy.

46 The accommodation is good overall with some very good features, particularly the school grounds. It fully meets the demands of the curriculum and has specialist areas including the computer suite, the Language Unit and library. At present the school library is underused. The school is planning an independent learning area for the older pupils that will include computers and non-fiction books for research. Additional classrooms allow the school to provide two ability groups for each year group in English and mathematics. Many of the classrooms are spacious and comfortable. Plans are in place to extend classrooms with more limited space. The school hall is larger than one would find in the majority of primary schools and provides good space for assemblies and indoor physical education lessons. Included in the accommodation is a community room and an area operated by an independent pre-school group. The internal accommodation is kept very clean and tidy by the cleaning staff and the caretaker, who is also a governor. Maintenance of the building is managed well.

47 The school grounds include three play areas for different phases of the school. Playgrounds are marked for different activities and can be used for outdoor physical education sessions. A reasonably sized playing field is suitable for athletics, football and other games. It is also a pleasant play area for the older pupils in the summer. The outside accommodation is an attractive area surrounded by trees and other 'green' areas.

48 Overall, resources for learning are satisfactory. The quality of group reading books is good and the school has a good range of equipment to develop pupils' athletic skills in physical education.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

49 To raise standards overall but especially in mathematics the school should:

### **Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school by:**

- making better use of information from ongoing assessment to measure the success of teaching and to plan the next steps in pupils' learning;
- planning and delivering work that matches the different levels of pupils' attainment in classes and sets more closely to provide greater challenge for all groups of pupils;
- making better use of learning targets for individual pupils, raising expectations of what they can achieve.

(Paragraphs: 14, 16, 17, 34, 35, 63, 65, 73, 83, 88, 89, 91, 95, 118, 133)

### **Broaden the role of all subject co-ordinators to include opportunities for them to obtain a clear picture of provision in their subject by:**

- monitoring pupils' work throughout the school on a regular basis;
- working closely with colleagues to play a fuller role in developing teaching and learning throughout the school.

(Paragraphs: 41, 91, 95, 97, 102, 109, 119, 135, 140)

## THE LANGUAGE UNIT

50 The quality of provision for pupils with speech and language difficulties in the language unit is very good. The many good features referred to in the last inspection have been developed and the school continues to successfully provide a model of effective inclusion.

51 The language unit was set up for a maximum of eight pupils from reception to Year 2. Currently seven pupils are on roll, two in reception, three in Year 1 and two in Year 2; three boys and four girls. Pupils enter the unit with problems relating to receptive and expressive language, which lead to delay in speech and comprehension. Difficulties may arise in emotional, social and behavioural development as a result of the lack of ability to communicate. All pupils have access to the National Curriculum and are either taught in the unit room or integrated, as appropriate, into mainstream classes: the aim being full integration by the end of Year 2. Pupils come from different areas and usually arrive in taxis. At the end of Year 2 all pupils will return to their own school. Pupils from the unit play a full part in school life, included wherever possible into activities with their peers. The unit is financed separately and is strongly supported by the LEA.

52 Staffing consists of a teacher in charge, a fully trained assistant, and a speech and language therapist for three days a week. Accommodation comprises a large open-plan room and an adjoining speech and language work room. The unit at the last inspection had recently been opened. It is now fully equipped and daily programmes run efficiently, with resources available to cover all requirements. The very good sense of teamwork enables all needs to be covered effectively.

53 Attainment is below or well below the national average in most subjects, though big improvements are seen to emerge as language and self-confidence develop. A child in Year 2 and a child in Year 1 are achieving successful standards, in line with those normally found. For example in English and mathematics; they are effectively integrated into mainstream for all areas of the curriculum. Other pupils have almost reached national standards in some aspects of the core subjects. In practical and creative areas, such as physical education, music, art and dance pupils from the unit often achieve equality with their peers. Achievement against personal targets is good and in relation to linguistic acquisition is strong. Progress in the unit is, in general, very good.

54 The quality of teaching in the unit is very good. Lessons are expertly prepared, with careful attention to detail and consideration of individual needs. The teacher shows very good subject knowledge and is especially skilful in promoting language acquisition. She is strongly backed by a very experienced assistant and the particular skills of the speech and language therapist, who may work with a group or an individual. Assessment is ongoing and is directly related to planning. Recording of progress occurs daily, with regular times for discussion and review of targets. Unit pupils in mainstream classes are monitored closely and all school staff co-operate fully with the work of the unit. The teacher in charge has high expectations. Class management is excellent.

55 Pupils in the unit show positive attitudes towards learning. They try very hard with their language and writing skills. They listen very well in class and are enthusiastic about tackling new goals. Their standard of behaviour is very good and they are aware of the needs of others. Pupils in the unit settle well in groups and work co-operatively with each other. Their personal and social development are very good.

56 Individual Education Plans are carefully written and are appropriate. They are reviewed on a regular basis and parents' opinions sought. Parents attend annual reviews and are in close contact with the school at all times. Home-school diaries support the

contact. Parents are very appreciative of the work of the unit. Regular homework and backup for speech and language programmes occur. Pupils' work in the unit is constantly monitored. All aspects of the curriculum are recorded and evaluated – the strongest emphasis throughout is on language acquisition and personal development. Some very good examples of music, dance, art and drama seen during the inspection showed opportunities for pupils to develop imaginative and creative ideas which linked strongly with language and all-round development.

57 Management of the unit is very good. Documentation is thorough and strategic planning effective. The teacher in charge of the unit is very well qualified and experienced and shows total commitment to getting the best possible results from the pupils. She is fully supported by the headteacher and all staff. In-service training is ongoing and relevant. The teacher in charge liaises closely with other teachers in other language units and has acted as mentor to one. Close links are maintained with the speech and language therapy service and all other relevant agencies. Visits are made to nurseries and feeder schools as necessary.

58 The school should continue to develop the very effective practice of inclusion for pupils with speech and language difficulties; and continue the good measure of practical, creative and expressive activities which give so many important links with language and understanding.

59 Pupils with specific speech and language problems have access to a strong resource base which supports particular needs. The general ethos of the unit provides pupils with a calm yet stimulating environment in which to learn. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. The language unit maintains a highly successful facility and is a strength of the school.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

74

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

27

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	12	30	31	1	0	0
Percentage	0	16	41	42	1	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	337
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	17

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	50

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10
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#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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	33	23	56

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	32	32
	Girls	22	22	22
	Total	49	54	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (62)	96 (75)	96 (75)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	29	29
	Girls	22	22	22
	Total	48	51	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (65)	91 (80)	91 (78)
	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	31	24	55

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	23	25
	Girls	22	18	23
	Total	44	41	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (75)	75 (60)	87 (75)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	26	23
	Girls	18	21	21
	Total	35	47	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64 (69)	85 (63)	80 (79)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	311	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	8	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)	15.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22-1
Average class size	26

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	263

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2002-3
	£
Total income	663,559
Total expenditure	638,397
Expenditure per pupil	1894
Balance brought forward from previous year	32,127
Balance carried forward to next year	57,289

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	337
Number of questionnaires returned	80

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	42	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	44	6	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	60	6	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	38	29	4	1
The teaching is good.	38	56	5	1	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	49	15	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	38	8	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	41	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	46	19	5	1
The school is well led and managed.	39	48	5	4	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	51	9	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	48	16	10	2

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

60 Children are admitted to school at the beginning of the autumn and spring terms before their fifth birthday. Most children have attended the pre-school group that shares the building and they are already familiar with the school by the time they come to attend the reception classes. At the time of the inspection there were 56 children in the reception classes. No children have been identified as having special educational needs but a few are causing concern and their progress is being tracked. Three children from the Language Unit are very well integrated for a few lessons each week. These children are effectively supported. Annual information collected when the children start school shows that attainment on entry varies between average and below average. The current reception children are average, similar to that reported at the time of the previous inspection.

61 Provision for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The school has worked hard to develop the provision according to the most recent national guidance. All children are soundly supported by the adults who work with them. In the best lessons, personal and social skills, basic communication, literacy and language and mathematical skills are promoted well. For example in a good lesson in the computer suite the need to start a sentence with a capital letter and finish it with a full stop was well promoted. In addition, the children were reminded that if in difficulty they were to ask an adult for help, as they developed basic computer skills such as what the 'caps lock' key was used for. There are many opportunities for children to begin to develop confidence when speaking during class discussions, or when they interact with adults during activities. For example, children were seen confidently talking with an adult as they pretended to work in the 'vet's surgery'. One child spoke very convincingly 'on the phone' whilst another child operated on a cat's tail. Parents and carers are encouraged to come into school on particular mornings to read with the children and these sessions are well attended. Other adult volunteers satisfactorily support the reception children.

62 Learning resources are satisfactory to promote all areas of learning inside the classroom. In addition there is a covered area for activities to take place outside and a secure playground area. However there are too few opportunities for structured outdoor play. Resources for outside include wheeled vehicles but there is no climbing or balancing equipment. All reception children have access to the apparatus in the main hall to develop physical skills.

63 Teaching is sound and this enables the children to make satisfactory progress in their first year in the school. The children are satisfactorily managed and behave well. However, at times adults allow children to move onto another activity or talk instead of listening. This is not good practice and does not promote or develop good listening skills. All adults interact soundly with groups of children, and in the best lessons opportunities are taken to reinforce skills and knowledge or develop vocabulary. However when this does not happen, for example when children are allowed to copy words and numbers incorrectly, their learning is affected. The planning and assessment system is relatively new and based on the national early learning goals. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop this system further. It does not always indicate how information collected on individuals or groups is used to move children on to the next stage of learning. This results in some children being given work, which is not accurately matched to their needs. Profiles on individual children are in the early stages of development but when completed will show how well each child is doing in each area of learning.

## **Personal, social and emotional development**

64 Teaching is satisfactory and this area of learning is soundly promoted in many activities. Behaviour is good and when the adults expect them to, most children listen well in all situations. By the end of reception most are likely to reach the expected levels. Progress is satisfactory because the children show positive attitudes to learning and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Personal independence is at times well developed. Children were seen preparing to go on a visit to a farm. All carried their own bags and were responsible for their packed lunch. However, at other times, adults miss opportunities to promote this area. For example too many adults were seen putting out plates and organising the tables during snack times. In addition when the children were given a cutting and crayoning activity there was too little attention given to the need to work tidily and keep the tools they were using on the tabletops. This resulted in the floor being littered with a range of tools and materials including finished pieces of work. The adult expectation of the need for everyone to tidy up at the end of the lesson was too low. There are many opportunities for the children to work in pairs and small groups and to begin to develop the skills necessary to work independently. This results in most children selecting activities with confidence. Planning and previous work shows that the children begin to develop a basic understanding of religions and celebrations within different religions. For example they listen to Bible stories such as 'Noah's Ark' and 'Joseph' and identify different emotions within the main characters.

## **Communication, language and literacy**

65 The quality of teaching of communication, language and literacy skills is satisfactory. Speaking, listening, reading and writing are promoted in many activities but adults sometimes miss opportunities to reinforce and develop listening and writing skills. When adult expectation is high, the children listen well. This was seen during assemblies and when they visited a farm and heard from a farmer's wife about a duck on the pond that had a bad leg. Although all children have opportunities to write independently, they need to become more aware of the need to form clear 'words' and 'spaces' as they write. Most children attempt to write their first names and a few write their full names. However, not all children write their name showing correct letter formation. Past work and observations during the inspection show that some children need more guidance to improve these areas and work is not always accurately matched to the children's differing abilities. Most children are likely to reach the expected levels in this area of learning and progress is generally satisfactory. All children have regular opportunities to listen to stories and the love of books is promoted well, which results in all children handling books carefully and enjoying reading activities. A few higher attaining children read fluently and with confidence. They begin to use their knowledge of letter sounds to work out words that they are unsure of. Other higher attaining children and those who are average, point to the words as they read and use their knowledge of familiar words, letter sounds and the pictures to tell the story. Lower attaining children have difficulty reading the books they are given and rely heavily on the pictures and the heard text.

## **Mathematical development**

66 Mathematical concepts are reinforced in many areas of learning. A lovely example was seen during their farm visit. The children were given interesting activities to promote numbers, such as counting the number of ducks on the pond and then recording their findings on a worksheet. They showed enthusiasm and enjoyment as they completed this task and obviously enjoy the many experiences they are given to develop basic number skills. For example the children sing number rhymes and songs to reinforce the order of numbers both forwards and backwards. All children develop a sound idea of basic mathematical vocabulary. They play in water and sand as they develop an idea of 'empty', 'full' and 'half full' and take part in activities, which promote creative development as they

decorate the wings of butterflies, reinforcing words such as 'symmetrical'. Previous work shows that they look at and begin to develop an awareness of two and three-dimensional shapes. Teaching is satisfactory. All children begin to understand the correct way to form their numbers but during some activities, adults do not always give them enough opportunities to reinforce this. For example previous work shows that some children frequently write numbers incorrectly and too little guidance is given to enable them to improve. Adults interact satisfactorily within the groups and give the children many opportunities to articulate their thinking, thus developing their mathematical understanding. For example, whilst working with a small group an adult was seen questioning the children soundly as they developed their understanding of basic subtraction. Questions such as 'How many are left?' made the children think hard. Progress is satisfactory and most are likely to reach the expected levels by the end of their time in reception.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

67 Educational visits such as the visit to the farm enrich this area. The children looked at the different buildings on the farm and learned new vocabulary such as 'farmhouse' and 'barn'. They looked closely at cows and ducks and learned the names of their babies, for example, 'calf' and 'duckling'. Visits like these allow them to get an idea of differences between towns such as Dudley and places in the country. In school there are good links with mathematical development as they use cubes to count how tall their beans have grown. Children look at the parts of a plant and begin to remember names such as 'roots' and 'leaves'. Progress is satisfactory. Construction toys are often used to build models as they work together in small groups or choose to work alone. All children learn how to join materials together by using a range of materials and tools. For example they made puppets and joined paper and card with sticky tape. Past work shows that they have looked at different items of food, which they could select to put in their lunchboxes. The children begin to be aware of the past as they look at life as a four-year-old and then as a five-year-old. Most of the children are likely to reach the expected levels for their ages by the end of the reception class. Teaching is satisfactory in this area. However good teaching was seen in the computer suite as a teacher and a voluntary helper worked with children as they wrote their names and copied a sentence. Basic literacy skills were well promoted and computer skills such as the use of the 'caps lock' key were effectively taught. Opportunities to develop basic ICT skills are good. Characteristics of this good teaching were the teacher's high expectation regarding the importance of listening carefully to all instructions and the necessity of asking for help if it was needed. Support was used effectively to reinforce where necessary. The task was well matched to the children's needs and learning was good. Learning was enhanced because the children responded well to the teacher's high expectations and worked with confidence and good independence.

### **Physical development**

68 Teaching is satisfactory in this area. There are regular opportunities for children to use the hall. Part of a lesson, which promoted physical development effectively, was seen where children from the language unit were well integrated. The children worked co-operatively together. They used space confidently and followed instructions satisfactorily during this dance lesson. Learning was sound because the children listened well and responded positively to the teacher's high expectations. There are insufficient opportunities for structured outdoor play sessions. None were seen during the inspection. Most children handle scissors, paintbrushes and pencils with sound control. Children used a range of grips to hold pencils. All children play imaginatively and confidently with construction toys and have many opportunities to use soft materials such as clay and dough to make models. Progress in this area is satisfactory and most children are likely to reach the expected levels.

## Creative development

69 Teaching is sound and most of the children are likely to reach the expected levels by the time they end their time in reception. There are many opportunities to express their own ideas and communicate their feelings satisfactorily as they play well together in the 'vets surgery'. Past work shows the children have cut out and matched animal shapes such as hedgehogs and rabbits. This area has been effectively linked to knowledge and understanding of the world as the children, using a variety of materials and tools, worked co-operatively on a colourful class picture showing what grows under the ground. Another attractive display of paper faces and collage animal masks clearly shows the satisfactory progress made in this area. The children sing songs enthusiastically and previous planning shows that there are sound opportunities to play percussion instruments.

## ENGLISH

70 The attainment of pupils in tests taken at the age of seven has varied significantly in both reading and writing since 1998. In 2002, standards in reading were below average compared to schools nationally and similar schools. In writing, standards were average compared to schools nationally, but just below the average for similar schools. In English tests taken at the age of eleven over the same period attainment has also varied but has generally been below the national average. In 2002, attainment was above the average compared to schools nationally and similar schools.

71 Present inspection findings show that by Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading and writing is similar to the national picture. The number of pupils reaching the higher levels with their writing is rising. By Year 6, standards in English are just below average. Across the school, pupils' speaking and listening skills are average.

72 The school's focus on teaching and learning in writing has been successful in raising standards. More pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 now reach the higher levels. This is because:

- there is a whole school approach to planning the development of fictional and non-fictional writing;
- expertise from within, and outside the school, provides good role models for teachers, particularly with the way stories are structured;
- writing assessment books reflect the good progress pupils make with their writing over time and indicate the next step for their learning.

73 At present, standards in English are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection, but for certain school groups, particularly average and more capable learners, progress has improved and is now good. In Year 6, work in pupils' books shows good progress with writing. Pupils themselves suggest that work in 'booster groups' has helped them to make better progress and to read with greater fluency and understanding. In the infant classes, work is well matched to the pupils' needs and so pupils achieve well. In each year group, the school 'sets' into two broad ability groups in literacy lessons. On occasions, in some Key Stage 2 lessons, less able readers and writers are not given enough time to write longer pieces of work and this can limit the progress they make.

74 By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 speaking and listening skills are average. Teachers' good questioning skills encourage pupils to contribute in lessons and so they begin to speak more confidently and explain their ideas more clearly. An example is when pupils in Year 1 explore books about animals and suggest, '*An octopus lives very deep, deep down in the sea*'. By Year 2, pupils learn at a faster rate and talk about their work in greater detail. One pupil explains '*if you start with a question it makes someone reading it more interested*'. Older pupils in Year 6 can give their opinion, but also listen carefully to what others have to



say. Pupils discussing different books differ over their choice. *'This is a mystery story and you don't know what happens until it hits you in the face. It's much better than finding out facts about sharks in the book you're reading'*.

75 Standards in reading are average by the end of Year 2 and just below average by Year 6. Discussions with pupils show they enjoy reading and that a growing number choose to read for pleasure. Parents are very supportive of reading shared at home and this is helping pupils to improve their reading skills. One or two pupils use the Internet to research for information about chosen topics such as space travel.

76 By Year 2, average and able readers read with understanding. They recall words by sight and link letters with their sounds (phonics) and so read with greater fluency and confidence. Able readers in Year 6 read in a mature and expressive way. They read between the lines to explain hidden meaning. Average attaining readers make good progress as they begin to empathise with different characters, and refer to the text to justify their opinion. Throughout the school pupils with difficulties with their reading have extra help with the basic skills in reading, either in literacy lessons or in small groups outside class and so make steady progress with their learning. However, the proportion of pupils who have more advanced reading skills is lower than in most schools and overall standards in the current Year 6 are below average.

77 Resources for reading are being updated and provision in the literacy hour and guided reading time meets the pupils' needs. The quality and range of 'free choice' books is improving. In the infant classes new structured reading schemes provide interest and support. Pupils have the opportunity to dip into a range of other books. The quality of group reading books is good. The number and quality of books in the library is satisfactory, though the school has ambitious plans for the development of this facility.

78 Standards in writing are average in the current Year 2 and Year 6. The current group of pupils in Year 2 left the Foundation Stage with below average attainment in communication, language and literacy. Teachers plan for a range of purposeful writing in English and in other subjects, such as geography and history. The structure of fictional and non-fictional writing is taught well in most classes and this enables pupils to shape their ideas and thoughts successfully and to hold the interest of the reader. Teachers demonstrate styles of writing effectively and this is helping to raise standards and move learning on. Progress in Years 1, 2 and 6 is good and some high quality marking helps pupils improve. Planning for writing across some year groups does not always reflect the needs of less capable writers in the lower group.

79 In Years 1 and 2 pupils begin to link the spoken and written word and experiment with writing stories and factual writing. They develop control over the size and shape of letters and spell everyday words correctly. By Year 2, pupils write sentences that make sense and begin to join their ideas together in a more coherent way. The basic skills are taught well and progress with spelling and handwriting is good. This year teachers predict that more pupils will reach the higher levels in writing, and inspection findings reflect this.

80 In Years 3-6 there is an appropriate balance between developing the basic skills using grammar, accurate spelling and punctuation, and writing for a range of different purposes. Lessons in Years 3 and 4 put an emphasis on enriching writing with the use of adjectives and similes. Teachers build on the good work by brainstorming and drafting ideas, developed over time in the infant and junior classes. By Year 6, achievement with writing is good, the current group of pupils were well below average in writing when they were aged seven. Pupils begin to draw together the different aspects of their learning in literacy lessons in a coherent way. For example one pupils wrote *'As evening approaches, the sun, like a big ripe orange, falls lazily into the balmy sea'*.

81 The school works hard to include all groups of pupils in lessons. Provision for pupils with statements of special needs is very good. Learning support assistants (LSAs) have expertise and take great pleasure in working with pupils and sharing their success. There are few pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) none of whom are at the early stages of learning English and they make the same progress as other pupils. During the inspection there was no marked difference between the learning of boys and girls and both groups contribute equally in literacy lessons. Behaviour in lessons is very good and this enables learning to move on at a good pace.

82 Teaching in English is good in Years 1 and 2 and in the higher attaining set in Year 6. In Years 3-6 it is sound overall with some pockets of good teaching. Teachers manage their classes well and have good relationships with their pupils. Teachers are making good use of the National Literacy Strategy and are some have the confidence to adjust the structure of lessons and how resources are used, to good effect.

83 In the best lessons teachers build on pupils' ideas and initiative, and have very good subject knowledge and clear expectations of what is to be taught and learned. Teachers use good models of spoken and written English to stimulate and guide learning. They use resources effectively, such as clear examples of texts, large enough for all the class to see when sharing reading and modelling writing. However, sometimes teachers miss opportunities to develop incidental work, linking ICT skills with the development of reading and writing. In less effective lessons, work of a similar level is planned and used for all ability groups. On occasions, teachers focus too strongly on knowledge about language and technical terms; this can cause confusion when pupils are asked to use this new learning independently. Marking is a mixed picture: at its best it moves skills on very well, at others, work is ticked but marking does not help pupils to improve.

84 The management of the subject is good and reflects the drive and expertise of the co-ordinator. The school has made good use of the guidance from specialists from outside of school to improve the quality and range of writing. Some effective monitoring of teaching and learning has been carried out. Analysis of assessment information related to writing is used well to identify the next step in learning and there is some good analysis of reading in the lower set in Year 6.

## **MATHEMATICS**

85 Standards of attainment are below average in Year 2 and Year 6 because the number of pupils reaching the higher levels three and five is below the national average. Standards were average in both of these year groups at the time of the previous inspection, so there has been a decline in standards. However, given that there are significant differences in the pupils' attainment on entry to the school this position does not necessarily reflect a weakening in teaching and learning or pupils' achievement overall. Improvement since the previous inspection has in fact been satisfactory. Although standards are below average in Year 2, the pupils have made good progress in relation to the standards there were achieving when they started school. The pupils' achievements in Year 6 have been satisfactory. The difference is explained by the quality of teaching and learning, which is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as their classmates through the school. Recent national test results have identified some differences in the performance of boys and girls that are different to the trends found nationally. Girls do not appear to do as well as boys throughout the school, though this was not evident during the inspection and the school is beginning to undertake a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of gender performance.

86 Although a significant number of pupils will achieve the expected levels in the current Year 2, the percentage that will achieve the higher level 3 will be below average. Because the number of pupils reaching level three is not the same as that found nationally, overall standards are below average. Higher attaining and average attaining pupils are able to identify number patterns and solve simple addition and subtraction problems. They recognise multiples of 10, use standard measures such as kilograms and grams and double and halve single digit numbers successfully. The pupils work with simple fractions and tell the time accurately using 'half-past' and 'quarter to'. The lower attaining pupils are less confident with their work and have a more limited mathematical language. They recognise and count in multiples of 5 and undertake data-handling exercises using tally-charts and pictograms. They appreciate simple place value using tens and units and add and take away numbers from 10. In some of these activities, a minority of pupils need significant adult support. Despite this year group making good progress overall in relation to their prior attainment, some of the higher attaining pupils could have made even better progress if they had been challenged more.

87 In Year 6, the proportion of pupils likely to achieve the expected level 4 will probably be very similar to the percentage in 2002. However, the percentage achieving the higher level 5 is likely to be a lot lower. Many of the pupils have an appropriate understanding of place value and the relationship between decimals, fractions and percentages. They successfully solve number problems, undertake data-handling exercises using bar and pie-charts and explain terms such as 'mean', 'median' and 'mode'. However, about a third of the year group have a mathematical understanding below that expected and are only beginning to develop a secure understanding of procedures such as division and multiplication and aspects of mathematics such as fractions. They are limited in developing their own strategies for problem solving and do not always provide answers and information in an organised and tidy way.

88 The quality of teaching is very similar to the previous inspection, although during the current inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed and this is an improvement. Teaching is more successful in Years 1 and 2 and consequently pupils make better progress. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully employed in the school and the majority of teachers plan their lessons following its recommendations. However, in too many classes, particularly in Years 3 to 6, insufficient attention is paid to the wide range of ability found in all of the mathematics groups. Although the school organises each year group into two mathematics 'sets' based on the pupils' ability, the range of ability in these classes is still often quite wide and in better lessons more attention is paid to this issue. Too often, pupils are given similar work. This leads to higher attaining pupils finding work too easy whilst other pupils in the same mathematics group do not always finish their work because they find it too difficult. This was very apparent in the analysis of pupils' work. Even in numeracy lessons that were judged to be good overall, more effort could have been made to ensure that all pupils were given work that was accurately matched to their needs. The use of day-to-day assessment is also inconsistent. In many classes, teachers follow their week's numeracy planning too rigidly without taking into account what develops in lessons on a daily basis. For example, scrutiny of pupils' past work showed that on a number of occasions when pupils failed to complete work, they still moved on to the next area of learning regardless of their knowledge and understanding of the previous lesson.

89 Teachers always make sure that pupils have a good understanding of the aims of lessons. To this extent, the majority of pupils have a clear view of what they are trying to do and can talk with reasonable confidence about their work. Where pupils' work is marked well, good references are made to the aims of the lesson and whether the pupils have achieved them. Further challenges are sometimes offered or clear explanations about why work has not been successful. This good practice is not consistent. Too often teachers' marking is superficial and provides pupils with very little knowledge of their learning. Analysis

of pupils' work showed worksheets that had not been marked or comments that had been made by teachers that had not been acted upon by the pupils. To raise standards further in mathematics, there needs to be a greater consistency in the teaching. The characteristics seen in the better lessons observed during the inspection need to be found in more classes. Lower attaining Year 2 pupils learnt very effectively in their numeracy session as they looked to interpret the information provided by block graphs. Very good references were made to the pupils' previous learning and the aims of the lesson were constantly referred to by the class teacher, "This is the learning that you have done so far". She ensured that all pupils participated in the lesson by directing appropriate questions to individual pupils. The pupils felt confident to answer, and because of the positive learning culture in the classroom, were not concerned if they got things wrong. They knew it was important to try. The teacher had very high expectations both in terms of academic performance and behaviour and this was reflected in the pupils' enthusiasm and desire to learn.

90 In most numeracy lessons the classroom relationships were very strong. The pupils' personal development was well promoted as they worked with each other in groups for activities or were encouraged to listen carefully to each other's answers or points of view. Despite the pupils' enthusiasm to learn, some of their work presentation was untidy and inconsistent. Although some teachers used ICT to present their lessons, ICT was under used to promote learning in mathematics.

91 The co-ordinator is experienced, has a good subject knowledge and recognises the areas for development in mathematics. However, he has not monitored and evaluated teaching for a number of years and this is unsatisfactory given the subject's importance. He has been able to look at pupils' work and teachers' planning. There are satisfactory procedures for assessment but better use could be made by all teachers of the information that assessment provides. The subject co-ordinator is currently involved with other colleagues from the local education authority in developing a system that will allow pupils to have their own targets for mathematics using language and terms that they will understand. This is welcome, given that targets for pupils is an area that is currently underdeveloped. Resources for learning are satisfactory. The majority are class based and accessible to the pupils.

## **SCIENCE**

92 At the time of the last inspection standards in science were average throughout the school. Since then results in national test and assessments have fluctuated but have generally been below average. However in 2002, results in Year 2 were average in regard to the number of pupils reaching the expected level 2, but below the average for those reaching the higher level 3. In Year 6 pupils' attainment was average compared to schools nationally and above average when compared to similar schools.

93 Current standards in Year 2 are average. Pupils have made good progress to reach these standards as the attainment on entry to school of this year group was below average. In Year 6 the number of pupils likely to reach the expected level 4 is likely to match the national average as lower attaining pupils make good progress and achieve well. More able pupils make only satisfactory progress and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level 5 is likely to be below the national average. As a result, the overall standards are below average compared to schools nationally.

94 The progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is good because they are taught well. Topics are planned thoroughly and delivered in an interesting and often imaginative way. For instance in Year 1 pupils are asked to write down some of their ideas about forces such as pushing, pulling, twisting and stretching. This enables the teacher to explore pupils' own ideas before exploring the scientific explanations and descriptions. Some of the work in Year

2 is of a very high standard and the quality of pupils' writing and presentation is very good. A practical approach is taken to science and the school has adopted a policy to ensure that practical skills are at the heart of topics. Pupils measure the size of hands and feet and analyse the results to see if there is relationship between them; this work and other topics is enhanced by drawing graphs of results linking science and mathematics well. There was very little evidence of pupils linking science with ICT and this an area for development.

95 The overall progress of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and this matches the overall quality of teaching. The quality of work in Year 3 is good. Pupils investigate and experiment regularly. For instance, they compare different types of paper to see which make the best filter and which materials work most efficiently as insulators. In other year groups though pupils are taught knowledge well, there is insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' practical skills. Many topics in Years 4, 5 and part of 6 could be covered in more practical ways, developing pupils' skills in measuring, recording results, analysing data or planning and carrying out investigations and experiments. Though teachers assess pupils' understanding regularly, the information is not always used effectively to plan new work when the topic is revisited. In Year 6, lower attaining pupils make good progress. Here, a more practical approach is obvious in pupils' work. Most of these pupils are working at the expected level 4 and this represents good and in some cases very good progress since their results in national assessments taken as seven-year-olds in 1999. The work of more able pupils in the top set does not challenge them sufficiently and teachers' expectations of what they can do and how they present work is unacceptably low.

96 The quality of teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 overall, though there is some good teaching in these year groups also. In one lesson in Year 2 teaching was very good as pupils classified materials as malleable or brittle, rough and smooth and magnetic and non-magnetic. Pupils recorded their results in a table and the teacher referred back to earlier work when pupils classified animals into different groups according to how they move. This linking with earlier work to consolidate concepts was a strong feature. The preparation for the lesson was detailed and meticulous which enabled pupils to learn very well and meant that they were highly motivated. In another lesson in Year 5 the teaching was good as pupils experimented with rubber bands altering the pitch of notes when the bands were plucked and compared their observations with readings on a digital sound meter. In this lesson, a pupil with hearing impairment was given high quality support and used special apparatus that enabled him to take part and understand this work on sound.

97 Recent improvements in Years 1 and 2 relate directly to the work of the science co-ordinator and a school policy to make science more practical. This policy now needs to be spread more widely and the co-ordinator requires more opportunities to monitor the work being carried out in other classes on a regular basis and to promote a more investigational and experimental approach throughout the school.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

98 Pupils reach average standards by the age of eleven and this is similar to the previous inspection. There is too little evidence to make a judgement on standards achieved and progress made in Years 1 and 2. However discussions with pupils in Year 2 indicate that the curriculum offered to them is satisfactory, linked well to other subjects and employing a sound range of media. For example, pupils talk of having used the outside environment to develop rubbings and developed seaside pictures as they linked the subject to their history and geography topics. Current work is linked to a visit to the Black Country Museum. Pupils are using their photographs of buildings to create their own drawings.

99 Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress. Judgements were made from lesson observations in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 and discussions with pupils and teachers. Additional evidence was gained through looking at small samples of past work in pupils' folders and sketchbooks in the upper part of the school.

100 Displays in Years 3-6 show clearly the satisfactory progress made by the pupils. For example, in Years 3 and 4 pupils have worked carefully and neatly using different types of materials as they made portraits of Tudor kings and queens. This work has been effectively linked with their history topic. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have developed a sound idea of three-dimensional work as they made papier-mâché masks. Cultural development has been soundly promoted in Year 3 as pupils used painting and printing techniques to produce colourful banners as part of the Dudley Arts Project. In Years 5 and 6 pupils looked at patterns and developed Rangoli patterns, which supported multi-cultural development satisfactorily. Past work shows that pupils work with a satisfactory range of materials and techniques.

101 There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on teaching but some good teaching was seen in the upper part of the school. Characteristics of this good teaching include using resources well in Years 5 and 6 to develop understanding, in particular with regard to the work of famous artists. In Years 3 and 4 pupils were given the opportunity to appraise the work of others, which they did maturely as they considered abstract art. Pupils with special educational needs were very well supported and this resulted in good learning within the lessons. Relationships within the classes were good and all pupils worked with enthusiasm and enjoyment as they learned effectively.

102 The co-ordinator is aware of what is needed to raise standards further, for example to develop assessment procedures and to monitor what is actually being taught throughout the school. ICT is in the early stages of development but is beginning to support the subject. For example some pupils have used the computers to draw pictures and develop repeated patterns. Resources are generally satisfactory to teach the National Curriculum.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

103 More lessons were observed in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2, and so discussions with pupils and an analysis of pupils' past work have been used primarily to form judgements.

104 By Year 2 and Year 6, standards in design and technology meet national expectations. This reflects the findings of the previous report. Curriculum time is now better managed and is adequate for pupils to carry out designing and making projects. For instance, work on moving buggies in Year 5 benefits from 'blocked' sessions that enable pupils to undertake more intricate and demanding work. Progress is sound overall, but pupils make good progress in the lessons where teachers have expertise and provide more challenging work.

105 By Year 2, pupils begin to plan their work, and carry through their designs. They explore different ways of joining materials together as they make puppets and models of vehicles. Younger pupils in Year 1 make good progress as they use the natural environment as a stimulus for weaving and decorating work in clay. Effective links with geography and the study of different building enable pupils to design and construct houses, shops and factories and add realistic decorations for windows and doors. There is little evidence of pupils using ICT.

106 By Year 6, pupils draw from their previous experiences by making and evaluating a range of products to enhance their ongoing work. In Year 5, for instance, pupils successfully

use their work on electrical circuits in science, as they follow step by step plans to construct moving buggies. The skills and expertise of the class teacher were evident in this lesson and it meant that pupils achieved well. Pupils are willing to amend their designs and test out new ideas. They select and work with a range of tools, mindful of health and safety issues. However, the quality of planning varies in lessons and could be of a higher standard with regards to detailed labelling and precision in measurement.

107 Discussions with pupils show they enjoy design and technology lessons and are very excited about designing and making an alarm system and constructing buggies. Pupils with statements of special educational need are very well supported and follow similar work to the rest of the class. The few pupils with English as an additional language are not at the early stages of learning English and so have no more difficulty than others in understanding technical terms.

108 Pupils have positive attitudes to design and technology. They listen to instructions and show an appropriate level of independence with their work. They are willing to try out different materials and make choices of those they think most appropriate.

109 In the limited number of lessons observed, teaching was good. Teachers guide pupils' learning rather than imposing their own ideas and this in turn encourages pupils to experiment and work more independently. For instance, in Year 3 and 4 pupils plan how the wires and switch for their circuits are going to be hidden from view. Teachers encourage pupils to evaluate and improve their work, but explanations of 'why' and 'how' could be recorded in greater detail, especially by older pupils. The subject is managed soundly and the co-ordinator has enthusiasm and expertise. Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning need to be established to identify gaps in pupils' skills and learning. Resources are appropriate to meet the pupils' needs.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

110 Standards are above average at the ages of seven and eleven. This is a good improvement upon the standards found at the last inspection. A major reason for this improvement is the production of a clear scheme of work that gives coherence to the subject throughout the school. Teachers are subsequently more secure in their planning and are beginning to provide not only interesting tasks for pupils but also some challenge in the work. This applies particularly to the work of higher and middle attainers whilst lower attainers are given effective support through carefully devised tasks or extra support staff input.

111 Although it was not possible to observe any work in Years 1 and 2 because of the blocking system of geography with history, the large sample of work clearly showed the skills being learnt effectively. There is a very good volume of work. Pupils record their knowledge and understanding independently by Year 2. Accurate geographical language is used in work about local and more distant environments. Work on the way that the Merry Hill Centre has grown is contrasted with the seaside environment of Struay. Imaginative use of the travels of 'Barnaby Bear' adds focus to the development of geographical skills. The good progress in pupils learning is confirmed in Year 2 classes where pupils complete more mapping work that prepares them effectively for further detailed work in Years 3-6. Work is generally presented carefully to support their literacy skills. Focused work on direction is giving strong support to the concept of space in their numeracy work. There is continuing good cross-reference to other curriculum areas. A study of old and new maps and consideration of the similarities and differences supports work in history.

112 It was only possible to observe lessons in Year 3. However careful analysis of work in Year 6 confirmed good progress being made by the pupils in their development of

geographical skills. Photographs as secondary sources of information were used skilfully in Year 3 as the housing conditions in the local area were contrasted with those of a village in India. The pupils found it easier to describe the differences but the similarities became apparent through the thoughtful guidance of the teacher. There is a growing emphasis upon the issues related to geography such as flooding as part of a river study. This effective preparation of pupils as future thinking citizens is made more meaningful because they have the opportunity to interview flood agency personnel. The pupils continue to record with care. They work in small groups, pairs and whole classes.

113 The teaching observed was good, and the work in pupils' books indicates that they have been taught well. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They plan carefully. Imaginative use is made of resources such as videos. Equally good use is made of carefully focused visits. This ensures maximum learning and enjoyment is gained from their learning by the pupils. The care with which recording is completed shows the good level of concentration being shown in completing their tasks. There was some use made of ICT in Year 2 where pupils were familiar with a programme that was a simple computer based atlas.

114 There is good leadership and management of geography. However, it is clear that a more structured system of assessment would give further support to the development of the subject. Not enough opportunity has been given to the co-ordinator to monitor and evaluate the learning through direct observation. The hard work and commitment of a well-prepared co-ordinator indicates that there is further capacity for improvement.

## **HISTORY**

115 Standards in history are average at ages seven and eleven. Standards have been sustained at seven and slightly improved at eleven so that improvement is judged to be satisfactory since the last inspection. Pupils make satisfactory progress. In both the lessons observed and in the large sample of work there is clearly an enjoyment in learning, particularly when the pupils have first-hand knowledge presented to them.

116 In Years 1 and 2, pupils are stimulated in their learning about the past. In Year 2, pupils learn about the life of Florence Nightingale. The teacher read the story of her life expressively to the pupils. The teaching role was then later taken over by a visitor who arrived dressed and in the character of Florence Nightingale. The visitor and class teacher had carefully planned this in order to gain maximum impact on the pupils' learning. The pupils had already compiled a list of thoughtful questions for their visitor in order to increase their knowledge and understanding. Questions were posed confidently. The class teacher made a few perceptive interventions to ensure progress in knowledge and understanding. Analysis of pupils' work demonstrated accurate recording and the use of 'clip art' that helps to develop their literacy and ICT skills. Most pupils attempt the same level of work and so sometimes higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently.

117 In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress as they make more thorough use of secondary sources of information. Pictures are used to make comparisons between the rich and poor in Tudor times in Year 3. By Year 5 pupils have moved on to more recent times and they watch a video of the 1960's as they progressively investigate the three decades between 1950 and 1980. This good use of varied resources helps pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of chronology. There is a good volume of carefully recorded work in the Year 6 class that confirms a clear understanding of the chronology.

118 Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features where interest is generated meaningfully for the pupils. Resources are used skilfully. However, too little attention is given



to producing tasks at different levels so that all pupils, including middle attaining pupils, are being adequately stretched in their work.

119 A recently appointed subject co-ordinator has only just had time to begin the process of understanding what needs to be done in order to improve standards even further. Some good initial steps have been taken to suggest that leadership and management are satisfactory with the capacity to boost the subject even further. There has been no opportunity for direct monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' learning. There is an assessment policy that supports the co-ordinator in arriving at an informed conclusion about the standards being achieved. This is a weakness that needs to be addressed.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

120 Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average, as they were at the time of the last inspection, and pupils' progress is satisfactory.

121 The majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good, reflecting the recent training for all staff that has resulted in increased confidence and awareness of how to get the best out of computers and other ICT equipment. In Year 1, pupils use the suite of computers to support their work in literacy, researching books and using information stored on compact discs. Year 2 pupils are confident and independent in logging on and off computers. They are familiar with and are able to demonstrate how to use several programs such as 'World Explorer' (a computer based atlas), word processing and painting programs. Year 2 pupils have also used computers to draw graphs.

122 Both classes in Year 3 were taught well and pupils learnt how to move a screen-based turtle around the computer screen to draw shapes of letters. This work involved estimating angles and distances. Pupils became more competent during the lesson in which they made good progress and linked their work with mathematics. Teaching and learning were enhanced by careful preparation and planning by teachers that ensured that the computer suite was ready for use before the lesson began. Teachers also made good use of a projector to teach pupils techniques and skills. In another lesson in Year 5, pupils visited a series of websites to investigate opinion and arguments surrounding the issue of hunting. They looked at a balanced view first of all and then moved on to other sites created by groups who have vested interests and polarised opinions. This was an example of very good links with work in English where pupils had been reading and writing about the hunting of whales.

123 Pupils in Year 6 describe how they have sent e-mails to pupils in Japan and America. They are able to demonstrate all the work that they have covered over the years as it is saved on the computer system. They have produced spreadsheets on the cost of a party, programmed traffic lights in sequences, measured and recorded temperature, interrogated databases in history and used various simulation programmes that involve the manipulation of variables. Pupils are proud of what they know and can do. Their confidence in demonstrating their knowledge and skills is impressive and reflects the regular experiences they have in using ICT. There is a clear policy that ensures that the 'Internet' is used safely.

124 Each class has a specific time to use the computer suite each week and this ensures that all pupils receive regular teaching in the subject. Some classes use the suite at other times as well to support numeracy or literacy or other subjects. This is currently organised on a fairly informal basis and might benefit from a more formal type of organisation.

125 Resources are satisfactory. The suite is big enough to sit full classes with a reasonable degree of comfort. There are plans to extend the provision of computers to include other machines in classes and this should enable even stronger links between ICT

and other subjects to be forged. The schools does not have a formal system for recording pupils' attainment and progress and this is an area that requires attention in the near future to supplement the existing storage of pupils' work on the computer system.

## **MUSIC**

126 Standards in music are average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Since the previous inspection there has been an improvement in standards in Year 6 but standards are similar to those previously reported for Year 2. Judgements were made from lesson observations, and additional evidence was gained through listening to pupils sing in assemblies and discussions with teachers and pupils.

127 There is too little evidence to make an overall judgement on teaching but in two lessons seen in Years 1 and 2, teaching was judged to be very good. Both teachers had very good subject knowledge and developed vocabulary specific to the subject such as 'tempo' – the speed of the music, and the 'rhythm' – the repeated pattern in the music, very well. This was expertly done by showing the pupils what the written form looked like, explaining the meaning clearly and then by encouraging the pupils to use it for themselves. In these lessons there was no time wasted and teachers gave pupils good opportunities to compose and perform. Relationships were very good as were the pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour. In Year 4, teaching varied slightly but was satisfactory overall. Good features in this teaching were the very good pace to the lesson where pupils were expected to listen well and follow instructions accurately. Where learning was good, pupils worked well together and did not waste time. They performed confidently and demonstrated good listening skills as they appraised the work of others. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about why performances were good and gave clear explanations about why some percussion instruments were better than others for certain sounds.

128 In assemblies, pupils sing well. However in some assemblies music is not well promoted and opportunities to sing are not fully exploited. Music is regularly played as pupils enter and depart from the hall but teachers miss opportunities to mention the piece of music and the composer. The choir practise weekly and are currently practising to perform at a local festival.

129 Discussions with pupils in Year 6 show that they have had satisfactory opportunities to develop the composing and appraising element of music. They have a clear understanding of words to describe music such as 'pitch' and 'tempo' because they have had many opportunities to use them. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 talk enthusiastically about music lessons. All talk confidently of composing musical scores and performing in groups during lessons. The previous inspection reported that music did not play a significant part in the school; this is no longer the case.

130 The subject is led by a very knowledgeable, newly appointed co-ordinator who has identified the need to update the policy and to develop assessment procedures for the subject. Resources have been developed to link in with the national guidelines. Music tuition is offered to pupils in the upper part of the school to learn the guitar, violin, flute and keyboard. Although pupils in Year 6 spoke of using a program to compose music when they were in Year 5, there is little other evidence of ICT being used to support the music curriculum. The subject supports the pupils' social and cultural development well. They have many opportunities to work co-operatively and collaboratively as they develop a basic understanding of music from different cultures.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

131 During the inspection it was only possible to observe pupils undertaking games and athletic activities. On the basis of this evidence, standards in physical education in Years 2 and 6 are similar to those expected nationally. A minority of pupils in Year 2 exceed these levels, particularly in their understanding of the effect that exercise has on their bodies. Discussions with pupils in Year 2 and 6 indicated that they are offered a broad and balanced curriculum that fulfils the demands of the National Curriculum and includes swimming for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Interviews with teachers and staff provided evidence that the majority of pupils fulfil and often exceed national expectations for swimming activities and water safety. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress and boys and girls achieve equally. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with medical difficulties, make the same progress as their classmates.

132 Year 2 pupils showed appropriate control and co-ordination as they undertook athletic activities such as throwing, jumping and balancing. They were able to explain why it is important to warm up before exercise and cool down afterwards. Year 2 pupils talked confidently about previous learning. They described dancing to the music from the 'Wizard of Oz' after watching a video of the film and balancing and rolling carefully and 'tidily' in gymnastics. Year 6 pupils talked clearly about the effects of exercise on their bodies and its value to health and fitness. Before they developed their cricket skills, pupils were confident enough to lead warm-up sessions that focused on the areas of the body used in cricket. Both boys and girls in Year 6 talked articulately about dance lessons where they developed sequences to classical music and more recently from the musical 'Grease'.

133 As only a limited number of lessons were observed during the inspection an overall judgement on teaching cannot be made. Lessons during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good. A very good lesson enabled Year 2 pupils to make very good gains in their understanding of athletics and the associated skills. After a rigorous and dynamic warm-up, the pupils quickly discussed how their bodies changed after exercise. "I can hear a lot of heavy breathing. What's happening?" This observation by the teacher invited plenty of accurate observations. The lesson built well on the pupils' previous lesson and the teacher showed good subject knowledge and promoted the development of athletic skills with comments such as "the foot should be stepping into the throw" or "drive the arms forward" to encourage pupils' jumping. The pupils showed obvious enjoyment as they jumped, ran and threw. Numeracy skills were well promoted as pupils used stopwatches or measured distances. The class teacher had high expectations of her lesson and what was going to be achieved. Although other lessons were satisfactory, some areas for development were common to all. Too little attention was paid to pupils evaluating their performance or that of others and identifying how things could improve. In some lessons not enough attention was paid to health and safety issues and teachers' subject knowledge was not always as secure as it should be.

134 The subject is used effectively to promote pupils' social development. Pupils are encouraged to work in groups and the school takes part in competitive sport with other schools such as football and athletics. Literacy and numeracy skills could be better promoted and in some lessons there are lost opportunities for example, to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills through discussions evaluating each other's work.

135 The subject co-ordinator is an experienced practitioner who has good subject knowledge. A good scheme of work, produced by the previous co-ordinator, ensures that the pupils are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum that develops progressively as the pupils move through the school. The co-ordinator has not undertaken any monitoring of teaching or colleagues' planning and this is a weakness. There are no formal assessment procedures for the subject although a new athletics programme, introduced by the current

co-ordinator, encourages pupil assessment. The curriculum is enhanced by extra-curricular activities, some provided by outside instructors, in basketball, dance, netball and cricket. These are generally well supported although only available for the older pupils. Resources for the subject are satisfactory overall but the equipment for athletics is good. The accommodation for physical education is very good. There are plenty of playground surfaces and grassed areas for games and athletics. The school hall is of a good size with specialist flooring not usually found in primary schools.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

136 Standards at seven and eleven years of age are above average when compared to the requirements of the syllabus followed by local schools. This is a good improvement upon the standards found at the last inspection. The pupils are making good progress overall and they enjoy their work. A major reason for this improvement is the fact that the school has adopted the syllabus followed by local schools. This has given structure to the work. It has provided teachers with a secure understanding of the range of world religions that help the pupils learn from, as well as about, religion. Issues are identified that support the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

137 Years 1 and 2 concentrate upon learning from the Christian religion. An example of this is their detailed knowledge of the story of the Good Samaritan with the understanding of the need to care arising from it. They link this clearly to their own lives by making comparisons with the Golden Rules that they live by in their school. Pupils in Year 2 classes expand their understanding of different religions with an in-depth study of the Jewish faith. Pupils complete a good volume of written work whatever their level of ability. Very little use is made of worksheets so the pupils' literacy skills are being well supported by the independent nature of their written work. Care is taken with the presentation of work because teachers are marking work conscientiously giving praise but also indications about how work can be improved.

138 The momentum established in Years 1 and 2 is sustained in Years 3 to 6. In a Year 4 class, pupils consider the symbols in a place of Christian worship. They work in a variety of ways. The teacher uses an overhead projector as a focus at the end of their practical activities, to bring their learning together. In Year 5, pupils focus maturely on how faith causes people to change their lifestyle through a study of the life of Martin Luther King. Feelings and emotions are a focus in Year 6 where music is used effectively to support the pupils' developing knowledge and understanding of how music is used in different faiths. Hinduism and Sikhism are studied in some detail. A good volume of work is completed with pupils presenting it carefully, particularly in Year 6. A thoughtful cross-reference to PHSE is clearly established in most of the work throughout Years 3 to 6. Some marking supports pupils in improving their work but this is not consistently the case.

139 Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers have secure understanding of the locally agreed syllabus that they use as their scheme of work; they plan thoroughly. Careful use is made of resources. Artefacts help the pupils to understand more about different religions and learn from them. A limited number of visits are made but there is not always enough attention given to the impact that they could have to improve pupils' understanding.

140 The co-ordinator is new and a clear action plan has already been drawn up. There has been no opportunity to monitor and evaluate the progress made by pupils. Assessments are related to the locally agreed syllabus.