

INSPECTION REPORT

ST PAUL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tipton

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 103988

Headteacher: Miss P W Hall

Reporting inspector: Andrew Clark
21596

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th March 2003

Inspection number: 246338

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Robert Road Tipton West Midlands
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Pauline Smith
Date of previous inspection:	12 th January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21596	Andrew Clark	Registered inspector	Mathematics Art History Physical education English as an additional language Educational inclusion	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?
9952	Lillian Brock	Lay inspector		The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22157	Mike Roussel	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Design and technology Music Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
24895	Kath Hurt	Team inspector	Science Geography Religious education The Foundation Stage curriculum*	

*The Foundation Stage refers to the children in the nursery and Reception classes.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Paul's Primary is in Tipton, a district of Sandwell. There are 213 boys and girls on the school's roll and a further 38 children attend part-time in the nursery. The school is of average size. The majority of pupils are from white, British families and approximately ten per cent from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Caribbean backgrounds. About seven per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is high. There are no pupils at an early stage of acquiring English. Twenty-eight per cent of pupils are eligible for a free school meal, which is above average. The percentage of pupils on the school's special educational needs register is 26 per cent, which is above average. Pupils' needs are mainly concerned with learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy as well as emotional and behavioural difficulties. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average. A higher than average proportion of pupils start their education at St Paul's in the juniors, often having been to several other schools. The children's attainment on entry to the school is well below typical levels for their age, particularly in speaking and communicating skills.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Paul's is a good school. The pupils make good progress and reach average standards in reading, mathematics and science by the time they leave, because of the good quality of teaching. Standards need some improvement in writing. The school is well led by the headteacher and there is a good environment for learning as a result. The management is satisfactory and the school gives sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well in reading, mathematics and science and very well in speaking and listening.
- Standards in design and technology, history and physical education are above average.
- Provision for pupils with special education needs is very good and so they make rapid progress.
- The nursery and Reception classes give children a good start to their education.
- The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good because of the school's very good provision for their social development. The headteacher gives a strong lead in ensuring that pupils' personal development is very well supported.

What could be improved

- Pupils are not doing as well as they might in writing.
- Some pupils withdrawn for extra teaching in English and mathematics miss learning in other subjects.
- The school does not always check carefully enough that its initiatives are being carried out consistently and that best practice is shared.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in January 1998. Improvement has not been as good as the school aimed for because of staff changes over the last two years and also because of the headteacher's period of disability. The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good, particularly for the youngest children in nursery and Reception. Standards in mathematics have improved, and in some aspects of English, although there is still work to do in writing. Standards in art, design and technology, physical education and history are higher than they were. There has been sound improvement in the time available for some subject co-ordinators to check on standards and provision in their subjects and better guidance given to them for fulfilling their roles. However, the systems to check that their roles are being carried out effectively are not yet strong enough. Methods of measuring pupils' progress are now satisfactory and good use is made of the information gained in mathematics but there is still room for improvement in writing.

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

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

Standards rose well after the last inspection, but fell in 2000 following staff changes and other factors. Although standards have not risen as well as they have nationally this largely reflects the smaller proportion of pupils than nationally who reach beyond the level expected for their age. In 2002 there was a significant proportion of pupils who were working at a lower than average level in English. Compared to schools in similar circumstances, the 2002 results were below average in English but matched results in mathematics and science. The test results for pupils in Year 2 in 2002 were also well below average but show steady and consistent improvement. The school's performance is good in comparison with many other schools in the local education authority. The work seen during the inspection shows sound improvement in both the infants and the juniors, and steps taken to address particular weaknesses in mathematics have been effective. Pupils of all abilities and those who are learning English as an additional language achieve well in most aspects of their work and there has been a steady rise in the percentage of pupils who reach the expected level for their age. There is a mixed picture of standards in English, with overall attainment that is below average. Standards of speaking and listening are good by the time pupils leave school and this is a significant factor in the progress pupils make in several subjects. They learn to explain their ideas logically and clearly to others. However, standards in writing are well below average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6. The basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation are not good enough. Standards in reading are below average in Year 2 and average in Year 6. In mathematics, standards are below average in Year 2 and average in Year 6 and there has been a good improvement in the ability of all pupils to solve problems and use their sound knowledge of number. Standards in science are below average in Year 2 and average in Year 6 and pupils have a sound knowledge and good practical experiences. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average. There are good standards in design and technology, history and physical education. In all other subjects standards are in line with expectations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their learning is well planned and targets set for them are appropriate. The progress of a small group of pupils, however, is limited because they are withdrawn for additional English and mathematics tuition too often and so miss learning in other subjects. The children make good progress in the nursery and Reception classes but their attainment is below that typically expected by the end of the Reception year, except in physical development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils of all abilities are eager to learn and take part in activities because of lively teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are polite and thoughtful of others. They develop a good sense of self-discipline through the school's careful guidance.
Personal development and relationships	This is good. Pupils are given many opportunities to take important responsibilities and think about how their actions affect others. They get on well together at work and play.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils are punctual and unauthorised absence is low.

Pupils make good progress in learning to behave as many start with poor self-control. The school's involvement in the 'You Can Do It' project is helping to raise pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence and most pupils enjoy learning and

are keen to do their best. Attendance has been below average because of the low attendance of a few pupils. There are good indications of improvement because of the effective steps taken to improve attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good overall and there is some very high quality teaching that promotes rapid learning. Teaching in mathematics and science is good and it is satisfactory in English. Numeracy skills are well taught. Speaking and listening and reading are taught well, but teaching of writing is weaker and opportunities are missed to develop writing skills in other subjects. Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to improve their writing and expectations are not consistently high. A significant strength is the teachers' ability to ask good questions to make pupils think logically and explain their ideas. There is a very brisk pace to the best lessons and teachers set precise time limits so that pupils are encouraged to work hard and think quickly. The pupils with special educational needs are taught well and pupils learn to become increasingly independent because of the good focus on developing their basic skills. The needs of the more able pupils are met well because much of the work allows pupils to think for themselves and use their knowledge. This is particularly effective in mathematics and design and technology. The teaching of the youngest children is good because the activities planned for them are stimulating and help them to mix well with others and persevere in their work. The teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to work in groups, in pairs or individually. The needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language are well catered for in teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school's well-planned and broad curriculum is brought to life through visits and visitors. Work is often imaginative. A small group of pupils do not get their full entitlement to all subjects because they are withdrawn for extra English, mathematics or special needs activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The special needs co-ordinator works very closely with teachers to produce useful individual education plans so they make good progress in basic skills.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Each pupil is treated as an individual. Pupils make progress as good as those of similar ability.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good. It is very good for pupils' social development because they are given real responsibilities, for example, in lunchtime organisation. The pupils enjoy good cultural experiences through art and history and the range of visits. Spiritual and moral development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures for making sure of pupils' welfare are good. There is good promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Procedures to measure pupils' progress are used well in mathematics and are satisfactory in English.

The school offers pupils a rich and interesting curriculum and all subjects are valued but there are too few opportunities for pupils to use and extend their skills in ICT in other subjects. The school provides good information for parents and encourages them to be involved in pupils' learning, although many parents do not take up the opportunities. However, parents' views of the school are positive. The school has a very caring atmosphere and the headteacher sets a good example in listening to the concerns of pupils and parents and giving practical support.

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 with the support of senior staff. However, some of the systems, particularly for checking teaching and learning, are not always followed through effectively and this limits progress in bringing all teaching and learning to that of the best. The management is sound overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Sound. The governors fulfil statutory responsibilities and manage finances well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There is a wide range of data from national and local tests but the analysis of information and the use made of it is inconsistent between subjects.
The strategic use of resources	This is good. The school is active in applying for grants to support learning in many areas and uses its funding successfully.

There are good levels of staffing used to give additional support for key areas of learning. The accommodation is good and the school is attractive and well maintained. The staff work closely as a team and are very supportive of each other but the effectiveness of individual subject co-ordinators is variable and checks on the general fulfilment of their roles are not strong enough. The school takes responsible steps to use funds wisely in view of the needs identified, and is competitive in tendering for services. There is a larger than expected carry-forward in the budget, which is earmarked for future building work.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school. • They are helped to become mature and responsible. • The quality of teaching is good. • The pupils are expected to work hard. • The school is led well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for parents. • Homework. • Out-of-school activities.

The inspection evidence supports the parents' positive views but not their concerns. The school makes appropriate use of homework to improve pupils' learning in several subjects and there is an appropriate policy to guide its use. The school keeps the parents well informed about their children's progress through detailed reports and regular parents' meetings. Unfortunately a significant number of parents do not take up these opportunities. The range and quality of extra-curricular clubs are very good with opportunities for involvement in sport, modern languages, crafts and computers. The school also provides a breakfast club everyday and a 'Happy Hour' fun club two evenings a week. There is a fee for some of the clubs.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results of the national tests for pupils in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science have risen steadily, although by no means consistently, since the last inspection. For mathematics and science the overall trend of improvement is similar to the nation trend over the last five years, but for English standards rose rapidly to above average levels for two years and then fell and have been slow to recover. This partly reflects the pupils' earlier attainment but also changes to staffing, particularly in Year 6. The results of national tests for English were well below the national average in 2002; they were below those of schools with a similar proportion of free school meals. The results in mathematics and science in 2002 were below the national average but average when compared to similar schools. The pupils' achievement from Year 2 to Year 6 is sound for English and good for mathematics and science. It is particularly good for more able pupils. The schools' performance is in the top 15 of 84 schools in the local education authority and consistently compares favourably with the other schools in similar circumstances locally.
2. The results of national tests for reading and mathematics in Year 2 have risen steadily over the last five years but remain well below the average. Standards in writing have risen at about the same rate as they have nationally but are again below average. Overall, more pupils are reaching the expected level for their age each year but fewer average pupils are reaching the higher levels than nationally. There is also a higher than average proportion of pupils who attain below expected levels. These results relate very closely to the low levels in language and numeracy skills that pupils have when they start school. The school exceeded challenging targets set for mathematics last year but fell below those for English. The steps the school has taken to address identified weaknesses and the quality of work seen indicate it is well placed to meet this year's targets.
3. Pupils of all abilities usually make good progress. This is because the school maintains good quality teaching and takes positive initiatives to raise standards such as additional time for the mathematics co-ordinator to work with groups of pupils, or additional curriculum time given to improve pupils' basic literacy skills. However, the school does not consistently follow this up by close monitoring of teaching and learning through, for example, regular scrutiny of the work of pupils of different ability or ways of sharing good practice.
4. From the work seen now, standards are below average in English, although there is a great variation in the different aspects. Pupils achieve very well in speaking and listening and their attainment is average by Year 2 and better than expected for their age by the time they leave. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in reading. Although standards are below average in Year 2, standards are broadly average by the time pupils leave the school. However, pupils' progress is not always good enough in writing and standards should be higher. Standards in writing are well below average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6. Pupils make particularly good progress in developing their speaking skills because of the teachers' skilful questioning and opportunities for discussion and performance. As a result standards are often good even for less able pupils. This is very important because the pupils' ability to explain their ideas and discuss their strategies helps their learning and progress in many other areas. The pupils make sound progress in reading by the end of the infants and good progress by Year 6. The more able in particular make good progress in reading fluently and with expression. Progress is weaker in writing. Pupils learn to write for a range of purposes, but their progress in basic skills such as handwriting, spelling and punctuation is not consistent or good enough. The school has recognised this and has created extra teaching time for these skills. However, although there are some good examples, writing is not sufficiently planned for and encouraged in subjects other than English and pupils do not use their basic skills with enough care.

5. In mathematics, pupils throughout the school are making good progress. The standards are below average in Year 2 and broadly average by Year 6. There are no specific weaknesses in learning through the school, but there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs for mathematics in Year 6 who are unlikely to reach the standard expected for their age. Pupils have sound number skills and often have a good recall of multiplication and other number facts. They are making good progress in learning how to solve problems involving different number operations. The more able pupils think logically and are working at above expected levels. This is because of the good practical learning in all lessons and the careful focus given to discussing their ideas.
6. Standards in science are below average by Year 2 and average by Year 6. Pupils make good progress and have particularly sound understanding of how to organise a fair test and plan and conduct experiments. The practical and open-ended nature of learning means that the most able pupils are challenged well.
7. A high proportion of children start the nursery with very low skills in language and literacy and mathematics. The pupils' speech and vocabulary are often poor when compared with children of a similar age. They often have poor self-control in their behaviour and limited social skills. The provision in nursery and Reception focuses directly in addressing these weaknesses and so children make good progress. However, many of them do not achieve the goals expected for their age because of the low starting point. They attain the goals for physical development. They attain many aspects of creative development but show little imagination or persistence. Standards in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, personal and social development and knowledge and understanding of the world are all below average by the time they leave the Reception class, despite the good progress made.
8. Although boys' results in the national tests are below those of girls, the difference is narrowing and there is no consistent pattern. There is no evident difference in the achievement of boys and girls from the time they start school. The school is very mindful of the need to promote boys' learning and has developed a practical, hands-on curriculum to support this.
9. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of very good provision for them. Pupils are identified at a very early stage and the special educational needs co-ordinator ensures the pupils' progress is carefully guided and monitored. There is a good concentration on developing basic skills of literacy and numeracy both in the classroom and in withdrawal groups. However, the same pupils are often withdrawn from other lessons for additional language and mathematics teaching and this affects the progress these children make in some other subjects.
10. Although the percentage of pupils whose mother tongue is not English is above average, there are no pupils in school at an early stage of learning English. The generally good match of work to pupils' needs and high concentration on developing speaking skills mean that pupils from all ethnic backgrounds make progress that is as good as their classmates.
11. Standards in ICT are average but pupils do not use computers sufficiently to support their learning in other subjects. Pupils achieve good standards in design and technology, history and physical education by Year 2 and Year 6. This relates closely to the quality of teaching and provision for the subjects. Even in design and technology and history, however, not enough opportunities are taken to improve writing skills. In all other subjects, standards are similar to nationally expected levels and pupils' progress is often good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes to school, their behaviour and their personal development are good. Relationships between all members of the school community are also good. The school is a happy place where pupils enjoy their learning and behave well in lessons and at play. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.
13. Pupils' attitudes to learning and to the school are good. When motivated by lively teaching, pupils are stimulated to make suggestions and express curiosity, for example during a Year 4 music lesson, when they 'painted with sound'. They explored the sounds made by a range of musical instruments, decided which sound effects were needed to represent the various features of a night scene, then used them well to 'paint' the picture. Pupils with a special educational need demonstrate good attitudes to learning due to the good support they receive. Pupils enjoy seeing tasks through. Most have an appetite for learning and take their work seriously. Children in the Reception class showed good attitudes to their work as they researched the different sources of light and recorded their findings on a chart. Some pupils find it hard to concentrate for long periods but the school's involvement in the 'You Can Do It' project is raising the self-esteem and self-confidence of these and other pupils.
14. Behaviour is good. In most lessons, hands shoot up to answer questions and most pupils try not to speak out of turn. They are friendly and welcoming to visitors and other adults and willingly show them their work. The good provision for moral development is clearly influencing the behaviour of most pupils. During a physical education lesson for Year 2 pupils, for example, their good behaviour contributed well to the progress they made as they mastered the skills of balance. They were willing to demonstrate their techniques to others and worked energetically throughout the lesson. The behaviour of pupils in and around the school is good. They wait patiently for others to arrive during assemblies and behave well during playtimes and lunch breaks. In the playground, their play is lively and happy due in no small part to the spacious playground with its attractive markings and play hut. There were two fixed term exclusions last year. No evidence of inappropriate or oppressive behaviour was seen as most pupils have a very good respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
15. Pupils' personal development is good and it is clear that their self-discipline is growing. There are very good opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility and they make the most of these because they are interested and involved in the life of the school. For example, older pupils are responsible for organising and managing the lunch time period. They have devised their own rota for calling in the respective classes and as a result, lunch times run smoothly. 'Reading Buddies' support younger pupils. This has mutual benefits for all the pupils involved and is an example of pupils' very good social development. Pupils are now involved in setting their own targets for learning and behaviour. Involvement in extra-curricular activities, including the breakfast and after-school clubs, is good. Pupils enjoy visits out of school and performing in concerts, assemblies and musical experiences.
16. Whilst attendance has been just below the national average for the last three years, it is now showing signs of improvement. Unauthorised absence is low because most pupils like school and want to attend regularly. Some of the authorised absence is due to holidays taken in term time and to the poor attendance of a few pupils. During the autumn term of the current academic year, overall attendance was above the national average with over half the pupils achieving 95 per cent attendance. Most pupils are punctual to school ensuring that lessons get off to a prompt start.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching and learning is good across the school. The quality of teaching and learning were good or better in three-quarters of lessons seen. In all but one lesson of the remainder, teaching was satisfactory. The staff have worked well together to develop a strong policy on teaching and learning and its impact is evident in many lessons, although the procedures to make sure that best practice is consistently shared are not fully in place. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, especially in the nursery and Reception classes.

18. A key strength to the teaching is in the questions teachers ask pupils. Teachers are very good at framing questions so that pupils have to give more than a one-word answer, and allowing them the space to consider their replies. This is particularly important because of the limited speaking skills many pupils start with. As a result, pupils learn to explain their thoughts and ideas clearly. This, in turn, helps the pupils to understand their work better. For example, in mathematics, pupils discuss the strategies for solving problems in depth and this is having a good effect on their standards. The process starts from the nursery when the teacher uses questions well to help the pupils recall what they have done earlier in the day or out on a visit to collect tadpoles. In the excellent and very good lessons, the teachers guide most of the learning through fast-paced questions so the pupils have a great sense of achievement because they feel they have found things out for themselves. Conversely, less effective lessons are sometimes the result of few questions being asked or little opportunity created for pupils to give more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer.
19. Teaching in mathematics is good. Lessons have a brisk pace and there are precise time limits for pupils to complete work. There are also good examples of teachers encouraging pupils to check each other's work in mathematics to improve their accuracy and knowledge of their own learning. Teaching in science is good. Teachers' lesson planning is effective, and they make sure that pupils know what they are to learn.
20. Teaching in English is satisfactory. There is good teaching of speaking and listening and reading. The teaching of English in the literacy lessons seen was good, but nearly all these lessons focused on reading and speaking and listening activities. An area for improvement is in teaching of writing and the opportunities given for pupils to use writing in other lessons. Teachers are not consistent in their approach to correcting writing and setting clear and consistent expectations for pupils about checking spelling or using their skills in handwriting in everyday work. In several subjects such as history and religious education the teachers miss opportunities to encourage the pupils to write about their ideas or to develop their note taking and other writing skills. In the best lessons, there is a good balance between oral work and written work.
21. The pupils learn to work hard and think quickly for themselves because the pace of most lessons is brisk and pupils know what they have to do in the time available. In all lessons the teachers explain very clearly what it is they expect the pupils to know by the end of the lesson or series of lessons. This helps the pupils to be motivated and feel involved in their own learning. For example, in art in the juniors, the pupils had a very good understanding of how colour is used to reflect emotions because the teacher had told them exactly what they were going to learn. In most lessons the teachers use the time well by allowing pupils to work in groups, on their own and as a whole class. However, in some less effective lessons the pace and challenge do not inspire the pupils so well. For example, in a science lesson in the juniors the pupils were given too much direction and had little opportunity to think for themselves and the pace was too slow.
22. The teaching in the nursery and Reception classes is good for all areas of learning and makes certain the children get a good start to their education. There is a very strong focus on the children's language needs and the teachers use good techniques to model sentences carefully and extend their vocabulary. The range of activities is planned well to encourage the children to act independently and to take simple responsibilities. This encourages the children to become more responsible and show self-control that many still find difficult. The nursery and Reception non-teaching staff make a good contribution to children's learning as they are well prepared and skilfully intervene in children's play and work.
23. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. The individual education plans provide good guidance which teachers use well so that work matches the pupils' needs effectively in most lessons. The teaching of small groups of pupils to develop their reading skills is often very good because the special educational needs co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the stages pupils progress through, and makes stimulating use of ICT.

24. There were no pupils at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language at the time of the inspection. Pupils whose first language at home is not English make progress, which is as good as their classmates', because the teachers know individuals well and plan appropriately.
25. In the best lessons, there are very imaginative methods used to motivate and stimulate the pupils and teachers' expectations are very high. For example, in history in Year 4, the lesson was brought to life through a story built round a Tudor chest and other artefacts in the style of the 'Antiques Road Show.' There is often a good, first-hand practical basis to the pupils' work that helps them to become more independent and retain knowledge and understanding well. For example, in an excellent lesson in Year 1 the pupils learned a lot about sound insulation because they were encouraged to raise the questions themselves and design their own experiments.
26. The use of homework makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning. As well as regular reading and number tasks, the pupils are encouraged to find out about history and other topics. Relationships throughout the school are good and pupils' behaviour is managed well. It is particularly good where the teachers set a brisk and challenging pace from the start by involving the pupils straight away and making work relevant to them. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson on conducting a debate, the teacher involved the pupils from the beginning through questions about their mobile phones and how they use them. A key feature of many lessons is the humour and sense of fun and enjoyment in learning. "He makes us laugh so much, we want to get it right," said one boy in the juniors.
27. Although many of the good features are evident in lessons in all classes the quality of the best lessons is not maintained consistently. Most lessons are planned well and matched to pupils' needs, but there is not yet enough careful monitoring of teaching to bring all work to that of the best and make sure the new teaching policy is fully effective, particularly in addressing the weaker writing standards

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

28. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils are good. The curriculum for the school is broad and balanced, based upon national guidance and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Religious education is taught in line with the local recommendations. The provision for personal, health and social education is good. The school has initiated the 'You Can Do It' programme that is having a good impact on the confidence and self-esteem of the pupils and this was observed in the week of the inspection when pupils were comfortably talking about 'Thoughts and Feelings'. Most of the health studies are undertaken in the science lessons, but in addition, and to further raise pupils' awareness of healthy living, pupils had taken part in a 'Health Walk for Action Heart' which also raised funds for the charity. The school nurse and the dental service visit the school each year. Provision for equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. However, some pupils are withdrawn from classes to receive extra support. These pupils often miss whole lessons and this limits their opportunities to receive their full curriculum entitlement. With regards to extra-curricular activities, all pupils regardless of gender are encouraged to take part in all activities. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
29. The national guidelines for numeracy are effectively used and the teaching of numeracy skills is good overall. The national guidance for teaching literacy is satisfactorily implemented but the teaching of skills such as handwriting and spelling and promoting writing through other subjects are not having sufficient impact on pupils' progress and are not consistently monitored. The school has also adopted national guidance for schemes of work in the foundation subjects¹.
30. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities for the pupils, including clubs for gymnastics, French, netball, computers, and Year 6 booster classes for those pupils who need extra support. In addition, there are a number of craft nights held each half term and there is a 'Happy Hour' club that takes place two evenings each week and a breakfast club is held each morning. There is a

¹ The foundation subjects are art and design; design and technology; geography, history, music and physical education. The core subjects are English; mathematics; science; ICT; and religious education.

series of visits to enhance the curriculum including visits to Edmond Hall, Jodrell Bank and the Black Country Museum.

31. The community makes a satisfactory contribution to the life of the school. For example, supporting the school with football training and giving the pupils the opportunity to take part in local events such as, the Tipton Civic Society Carol Service and activities at Murrey Hall. Relationships with partner institutions are satisfactory. For example, teachers from two of the local secondary schools visit Year 6 early in the school year to talk to them about moving from St Paul's to their next school. Pupils then have the opportunity to visit the schools in the summer term, prior to transfer. There is also a visit arranged for Year 5 pupils to one of the secondary schools for a science fair.
32. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and they are well supported, by both the special educational needs co-ordinator and the learning support assistants. The co-ordinator is well informed and offers good guidance to staff in producing individual education plans for pupils. She monitors the pupils' progress very carefully and establishes good relationships with other support professionals such as the education psychologist. She acts as a good example to staff through her skilful teaching of reading and numeracy to groups of pupils with special educational needs.
33. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development and very good provision for their social development. The spiritual development is good because staff value each individual and help them understand school rules and acceptable ways of conducting themselves. The opportunities for pupils to gain insight into values and beliefs in order to further their spiritual awareness are very good. They are enhanced by the high priority that is placed on school assemblies, circle time, visits to church services and the Monday Club Bible Class.
34. The school's approach to pupils' moral development is good. Moral issues are regularly dealt with, both in and out of the classroom with the school's Golden Rules displayed in each classroom. Teachers are good role models and, combined with their caring relationships with pupils, they promote values of honesty, fairness and truthfulness. This approach leads to pupils developing a clear awareness of the difference between right and wrong and as a further incentive teachers use rewards and sanctions effectively to promote effort and good behaviour.
35. The provision for encouraging the social development of the pupils is very good. The school values its members and encourages pupils to integrate well both at work and at play. This is seen where pupils take on specific responsibilities, such as pupils managing the lunchtime rota, undertaking classroom monitor roles, and being 'Reading Buddies' where the older pupils support the younger ones before school. In the classroom there are opportunities to work together in pairs or groups. Pupils' awareness of people outside the school community is developed through visits, such as those to the church for Christmas and Easter services, and singing and performing to the elderly and in civic functions. Visitors to the school further develop the pupils' awareness of their community and what the pupils can contribute back to it through the charities they support.
36. The provision for cultural development is good. Pupils start to understand their own cultural background from nursery rhymes, poetry, stories, music and historical studies. Painting and music help them to develop a greater awareness of beautiful things, as does the beauty of the world about them. The school is fortunate to have a rich Victorian environment and to enhance this experience pupils visit the Black Country Museum. Displays were seen in classrooms of different world faiths and the French club gives pupils an opportunity to study another language and culture in greater depth.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school continues to help pupils to grow and flourish within the 'family' of St Paul's School. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The school has maintained the strengths from the last inspection. There are good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development. From their early days in nursery, children are well cared for and this continues throughout their time in school.

38. The school follows child protection procedures rigorously. The designated teacher is well trained and she shares her expertise effectively with all staff. There is close liaison with a range of external agencies on behalf of pupils. There is a positive atmosphere and the teachers and support staff know their pupils well. Pupils who have a special educational need are well supported and make good strides in their learning in a fully inclusive environment. The personal and social education programme includes sex education and older pupils are given additional support from the headteacher. Pupils in their final year at school confirm that there is always someone they can turn to if they have a problem and whilst they are excited about their move to secondary education, they are sad to be leaving the school. All this good provision results in a high level of care for pupils.
39. The procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are good and their success can be seen in the good behaviour of most pupils. The school has been concerned to involve pupils in developing their own rules of conduct and this has successfully fostered a good atmosphere in lessons. Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with appropriately. Good behaviour is rewarded and staff concentrate on reinforcing its success. The behaviour and anti-bullying policies provide a good framework for staff to follow in providing for pupils' moral development. There are special assemblies when pupils celebrate each other's achievements and their very good social development can be seen as they spontaneously applaud the contribution of others in lessons. Pupils confirm that the headteacher and staff would not tolerate bullying. There have been two fixed period exclusions in the year prior to the inspection. This reflects the school's determination to allow pupils to study in a quiet, calm, purposeful learning atmosphere.
40. The procedures for monitoring and promoting regular attendance are good. The computerised registration system enables correct records of attendance to be completed and early identification of emerging patterns of poor attendance. Holidays taken in term time affect the overall attendance figures as well as the intermittent attendance of a few pupils. A copy of the individual attendance record for their child is sent to parents with the annual report on progress and this is having a good impact on improving pupils' attendance. The school receives good support from the education welfare service. An audit of the school's attendance and absence figures has been completed by the service and this has helped the school to compare its own record of attendance with those of other schools.
41. Health and safety procedures are good. There is one person fully qualified in first aid procedures and all members of staff have received emergency first aid training. All adults who work in school are aware of the medical needs of pupils and receive appropriate training to support them. There are regular risk assessments of the premises that follow local authority guidelines and there is a health and safety committee of the governing body. Teachers conduct a risk assessment before any visit out of school is planned. The caretaker is vigilant on a daily basis and ensures that the site is kept clean and free from debris. There are regular fire drills and maintenance of electrical and other equipment.
42. The procedures to support pupils' personal development are good and relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves are good. The personal and social education programme raises pupils' awareness of personal safety and of their commitment to be a good citizen. Visits out of school concentrate on promoting pupils' personal and social skills and as a result, their learning and life experiences are enhanced. Sex education is delivered sensitively through the curriculum and through discrete lessons for Year 6 pupils. The lunchtime system organised by older pupils is giving them a real sense of responsibility and is used as a model for other schools. All these good procedures equip pupils for life in and out of school and contribute well to their personal development.
43. The procedures for checking how well pupils are doing are satisfactory overall. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when they were judged to be unsatisfactory. There are good systems in English and mathematics that produce valuable information so that teachers are well aware of the different abilities of pupils in their classes. There are good systems in place that are used well to plan children's next steps in the Foundation Stage. Pupils with special educational needs are carefully assessed, and the information wisely used to set targets in their clear individual education plans.

44. In most other subjects, systems for assessment are improving with the recent introduction of an agreed system. However, these systems are still new, and their impact is not yet fully evident. The school is waiting for new local guidance for assessment in religious education. In English and mathematics there are sound systems for collecting this information in a format that shows pupils' progress as they move from class to class throughout the school. The Key Stage 2 co-ordinator has a good overview of progress in these subjects.
45. The school makes good use of its analysis of results in most aspects of English, mathematics and science. For instance there are now more opportunities for investigation in science that are boosting pupils' enquiry skills. There are regular planned speaking and listening sessions because the school has identified weaknesses in pupils' skills in these aspects. This information is now building a good picture of pupils' progress as they move from class to class. It is effectively used to group pupils in classes and in the various additional support groups organised in mathematics and English. There are weaknesses, however, in the extent to which teachers use the information gained from assessments of pupils' writing.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Parents consider that the school is a good school that is helping their children to become mature and responsible and inspection findings confirm this view. Parents feel that the school promotes the attitudes and values they would expect and instils a work ethic in which children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. There has been sound improvement since the last inspection. The school is continually looking at new ways to involve parents in the life of the school.
47. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good but this has yet to have a full impact on children's learning. The school was pleased that 40 parents attended a training session on the 'You Can Do It' programme and this is an example of the value that the school places on the involvement of parents in their children's learning. The majority of parents are confident enough to seek advice when they have a problem or concern and the questionnaire responses support this view. Parents are given advice at the consultation evenings about the homework that pupils need to complete and many parents support and help children at home. Some parents are not happy about the amount of homework that children do but inspection findings are that it is similar to that given in most schools. There is a small number of parents who help regularly in school and in return, the school encourages them to seek qualifications by helping to fund the training. The school intends to restore the Friend's Association although parents do support the social and fund-raising activities organised by the school.
48. The information that parents receive is good. Newsletters give parents useful information about events in the school. The prospectus and annual report of the governing body are clear and easy to read. This good information begins in the nursery when parents have an individual consultation with the teacher. An attractive and useful information booklet is provided for parents of children in the Foundation Stage and sets out clearly how parents can help children at home. The guidance on how to help children with reading, writing and mathematics is helpful to parents. The school further encourages parents to support their children's learning because it offers a consultation evening each term when parents can find out about the topics their children are learning and about the progress they are making. There is very useful guidance for any parent who offers their help in the school. The annual reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory overall. Whilst they give good information on the progress that pupils have made, they give very little guidance to parents on what their children need to do to improve. Targets are set but these are not always specific enough or free of educational jargon. The strength of the reports is in the teacher's comments on personal and social development that show that they know their pupils very well.
49. The school reaches out to parents but not always with the success it would like. Parents of children with special educational needs are invited to the regular meetings but not all of them attend. The school ensures that it informs these parents of the progress made by their children and of the targets that have been set. There are plans in hand to invite parents to work alongside their children in the Reception class on literacy and numeracy tasks and to offer more Open Days to parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

50. The headteacher provides good leadership, with a clear vision for the future development of the school that creates an effective climate for learning. Despite two periods of major surgery in the past two years the headteacher has lost none of the commitment and drive seen at the last inspection. The headteacher sets the tone for the school in her first hand knowledge of every child and the care taken in pursuit of their personal development and welfare. Her commitment is high and the strong response to the last inspection led to a rapid rise in standards. However, absences over the last three years have restricted the impact of some initiatives. She is now very much back on course. She knows the strengths of her staff well and encourages them to share ideas and concerns. As a result teachers feel that they are working to a common purpose and are motivated and adaptable. The Christian aims of the school are explicit in the prospectus and other documents and are an intrinsic part of the approach of all staff.
51. The management of the school is satisfactory. Senior managers support the headteacher well and there is strong teamwork amongst the teachers. However, the procedures to make sure that the best is achieved in all aspects of the school's work rely too heavily on informal methods and are not always rigorously checked or followed up. The senior staff use their diverse skills effectively in mentoring of new staff, for example, or in the care of pupils and the relationship with parents. However, there are not sufficiently robust and consistent systems for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning objectively and regularly and using this knowledge to share the best practice and raise standards. There is, for example, more effective monitoring in some subjects than others and a clearer sense of purpose. For example, in mathematics, management is good and the school has worked well towards improving pupils' problem-solving skills and knowledge of number. The progress of individuals and groups of pupils has been carefully analysed over a number of years and outcomes shared with staff. This has enabled the co-ordinator to make good use of additional teaching time for the subject. As a result, standards have improved at a good rate. These effective systems are not so rigorously in place for English. Although some steps have been taken to address weaknesses in basic skills, the analysis of pupils' work is not strong enough to focus sufficiently on the success or otherwise of any initiatives. The teachers and teaching assistants have worked hard together to develop a very useful policy on teaching and learning which is beginning to underpin the teaching seen. However, it is not obvious what steps the school is taking to make certain that the best practice is shared consistently and that the policy is fully implemented.
52. A wide range of assessment and test data is used effectively to guide school improvement planning. The school also draws on the views of the pupils and parents. The depth of the analysis of information is variable and relies too heavily on the knowledge and understanding of individuals. There are, however, good systems to make sure that developments are communicated well to staff and all policies and documents are readily available to parents. A particular strength is the good record keeping of the outcome of parents' meetings, which is used to identify both individual and class wide concerns. The school has undertaken an in-depth review of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attitudes and this is used to promote pupils' personal development well. The school's overall knowledge of the pupils means that target setting for raising standards is appropriate.
53. The school makes efficient use of specific grants. For example, additional funding to meet the needs of the less able in English and mathematics is used appropriately and teaching assistants are well trained so the quality of teaching is good. The management of special educational needs is very good. The co-ordinator works closely with staff to identify pupils' needs, to measure their progress and to plan individual education plans. This successfully complements work in the classroom and in withdrawal groups. Teaching for these pupils is very appropriately focused on their literacy, numeracy and learning skills and effective use is made of ICT. However, when combined with other initiatives, some pupils are withdrawn too often from other lessons and this affects the balance of the curriculum they receive.

54. The management of the education of the youngest children in the nursery and Reception classes is good. There is close liaison between staff in planning and assessment of children's needs and a strong common sense of purpose based on a good knowledge of the learning needs of young children. There are exciting plans to develop the nursery and Reception classes into one unit currently under consideration.
55. The governors are supportive of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities appropriately. The chair of governors and other established members are involved in the regular life of the school and know the strengths and weaknesses well. The headteacher's reports to governors are informative and comprehensive. There are sound systems for governors to meet with teaching staff, particularly subject leaders, and discuss the school's progress. However, there is not enough guidance on the sort of questions to ask to fully promote and understand the subjects of the curriculum and so act as a critical friend. They are well informed on financial and budget setting issues. The headteacher, school administrator and local education authority representatives provide in-depth budget analysis and the governors use this well in making certain that areas for school improvement are well resourced. As a result, the resources for most areas of learning are good and up to date. They follow local authority and national guidance well to make certain they provide best value. The school works closely within its annual budget. There is, however, a very large carry-forward from year to year because of money accrued for a major building project. This has been responsibly and prudently managed, in agreement with the local education authority. The cost per pupils is above average. The pupils make good progress although standards in writing need some improvement; the quality of teaching is good and there is a good ethos for learning. The school gives sound value for money. The school has taken strong steps to ensure it gives value for money in its purchases and services. For example, the financial management is more efficient because the school buys in the services of a financial manager after comparing costs and provision with that of the local education authority. The day-to-day administration is very good. There has been a good level of training. The receptionist and school administrator work in close partnership but with clearly defined responsibilities. The parents appreciate their knowledge of the pupils and school routines.
56. The quality of accommodation is good overall and it is meticulously maintained. The classrooms are bright with stimulating displays of pupils' work. It is particularly outstanding in the nursery. Good use is made of the library area and music room. There are good levels of staffing and good use is made of the skills of well-trained teachers' assistants for supporting literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. The professional development of staff is sound. The mentoring and support for new staff are generally good. There is a good balance between guidance, support and time for personal development.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to raise standards the school should:

1) Improve standards in writing by:

- Ensuring that teachers' marking gives clear guidance to pupils on what needs to improve;
- Ensuring that teaching makes better use of information from assessments to plan challenging work;
- Providing better opportunities for pupils to use their skills in writing in other subjects;
- Checking that teaching has common approaches and suitably high expectations and that best practice is shared.

2) Ensure that pupils who are withdrawn from lessons do not lose their entitlement to a full curriculum.

3) Improve the consistency and rigour of the school's systems for checking its provision and sharing best practice in teaching.

In addition to the key issues above, the following points should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan:

Ensure that pupils have more opportunities to use simulations and sensors in ICT and that ICT is used more effectively to support the pupils' learning across subjects.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	10	22	9	1	0	0
Percentage	11	21	47	19	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	19	213
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	53

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	55

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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	12	18	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	11	12
	Girls	13	14	14
	Total	22	25	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	73 (77)	83 (77)	87 (83)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	11	10
	Girls	12	15	10
	Total	22	26	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	73 (80)	87 (83)	67 (83)
	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	12	19	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	8	10
	Girls	13	16	17
	Total	18	24	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (52)	77 (52)	87 (90)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	6	10
	Girls	13	14	17
	Total	19	20	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (52)	63 (59)	87 (72)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	157	2	-
White – Irish	1	-	-
White – any other White background	-	-	-
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	-	-
Mixed – White and Black African	-	-	-
Mixed – White and Asian	1	-	-
Mixed – any other mixed background	-	-	-
Asian or Asian British - Indian	7	-	-
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3	-	-
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	-	-
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	-	-
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	-	-
Black or Black British – African	-	-	-
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	-	-
Chinese	-	-	-
Any other ethnic group	-	-	-
No ethnic group recorded	-	-	-

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32
Number of pupils per FTE adult	6

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	2001/2002
	£
Total income	552110.00
Total expenditure	600669.00
Expenditure per pupil	2820.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	130 000.00
Balance carried forward to next year	119 000.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	232
Number of questionnaires returned	108

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	40	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	40	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	39	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	40	9	6	1
The teaching is good.	64	33	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	35	19	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	24	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	35	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	44	37	9	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	62	35	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	35	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	33	10	2	8

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

58. Children enter the nursery class when they are three years of age, moving on to the Reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. Many children have skills that are well below average when they start in the nursery, particularly in their speech and language. The nursery teacher forges very good links with parents. They receive good information in booklets and newsletters, and she takes time to listen to them talking about their children when they visit the class. There are good systems for checking how well children are doing, and teachers make good use of the information to plan their next steps. The reports sent home by both teachers give good information, so that parents can clearly see how well their children have achieved in the Foundation Stage. The good liaison between both teachers is evident in both this and their shared, effective planning. Children enjoy a wide range of interesting activities that broaden their experiences considerably. All the adults, including the adult volunteers, have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and form a strong and successful staff team. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
59. Teaching in the nursery and Reception classes is consistently good so that children make good progress in all areas of their learning. However, because of their low starting points, many children do not securely reach the goals set for them in each of the areas of learning by the time they start in Year 1, with the exception of their physical development. In this area they generally reach the goals. Those with special educational needs are identified early and receive very good support that helps them build their skills successfully alongside other children.

Personal, social and emotional development

60. Good teaching in this area gets children off to a good start in the school. Although not securely reaching the goals set for this area, they are close to attaining them. The adults make sure that children understand the routines and know what is expected. They provide good examples in their own teamwork and reinforce children's understanding in their timely, gentle reminders. As a result, children behave well and play happily together, sharing and helping others. An example was when children in the Reception class were enjoying a *Ten Cats Have Hats* story. "I'll help you put it on," said one child when she saw another child was struggling to put on her nurse's hat. Children become more independent so that most need little help in dressing and undressing or moving around the activities freely. The monitors in the Reception class proudly and sensibly took the registers to the school office. However, despite the teacher's prompts and explanations, in this class the children sometimes showed limited self-control and concentration. For example, in their eagerness to talk about *The Jolly Postman* story, they called out and constantly interrupted when the teacher was talking.

Communication, language and literacy

61. Children do not reach the goals set for them in communication, language and literacy in spite of good teaching because of their low starting points. The fact that these children are so keen to speak is due to effective teaching that helps children achieve well. Teachers provide good models in their own speaking, using questions effectively so that children want to speak and rapidly extend their vocabulary. As a result, children who are initially limited in their speaking in the nursery become more confident as they move into the Reception class, although their speech is sometimes still immature and brief. Children in the Reception class have a good understanding of how people communicate by writing because they have played in the class 'Post Office', examined a letter from Bob The Builder and a fax from the children in Newtown School. These and the writing corner provide valuable opportunities for children to write in their play. Regular practice means that most children write their names recognisably. However, only the most able children are independent enough in writing and will securely reach the goals.

62. Children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories because each class has a stock of good quality books. Teachers choose the books to read that they know children will enjoy. Children in the nursery show a keen interest in books and stories because the nursery teacher promotes reading very effectively. They benefit considerably from regular individual and small group work with an adult volunteer. Puppets and a big book, together with lively reading and discussion, meant that children remembered the story of the *Three Little Pigs* well. With her help and the use of the puppets, they enjoyed speaking the words of the pigs and wolf, successfully retelling the story. The nursery teacher works hard to enlist parents' help in home reading. Books are sent home regularly and she shares information with parents in the reading diaries so that they know how to help. Both teachers encourage children to learn the sounds of letters so that children in the Reception class can identify many letters of the alphabet when they see and hear them. However, some children still find it hard to concentrate when reading with a visitor. They listen carefully when adults read and make reasonable attempts at telling the story using picture clues. Only the more able children read a simple text from the reading scheme confidently and accurately, and even they find it hard to read simple captions and words displayed around the room.

Mathematical development

63. The teaching of mathematical development and the progress children make are good. However, overall children are unlikely to reach the goals in this area by the time they move into Year 1. The teachers in both classes provide plenty of opportunities for individual and small group work that gives the extra practice that many children need before they grasp new learning. Well-prepared resources captured children's interest in the nursery, like the toy frogs and lily pads the teacher used successfully so that they wanted to count and match the numbers. Her questions and individual help meant they became more confident, though not always accurate, in counting and recognising numbers up to six. The nursery assistants also seize every opportunity to help children individually. An example was when an assistant counted with a child so that he carefully matched the numbers one to five on a tree shape. Children in the Reception class developed a sound grasp of simple measurement when the teacher involved them in sorting socks from the longest to the shortest on a washing line. Because they found it interesting, they concentrated well. The adult helpers provided good support for the activities that followed. However, these were not as well matched to the children's abilities as they might have been. Children made less progress than they might when they spent too long writing, or found it hard to place their hands when asked to measure in hand spans.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

64. Children achieve well in this area because the teaching is good. Although close, they are unlikely to securely reach the goals for their age in all aspects of their knowledge and understanding of the world because their ability to clearly describe and explain what they know is sometimes weak. Teachers are well aware of this, and do all they can to extend children's vocabulary. A good example of this was when the Reception class were exploring items that created light. The teacher encouraged children to talk about the candle, mirror and torch, insisting that they name them correctly and explain to others whether they would give light or not. They showed curiosity at some of the new and interesting things they examined so they listened and observed carefully. Good prompting by their teacher and other adult helpers meant they acted like 'young scientists', and had a clear understanding of their similarities and differences. In this aspect they comfortably achieve the goals. Children develop sound control of the mouse in moving around the computer screen, but they often rely on adult support in persevering and operating programs successfully. In the nursery an assistant talked to three children as they made models using boxes and other junk materials. Because of her timely questioning and encouragement for them to 'have a go', they added more details like matchstick windows for a house and wheels for a lorry that made their models more interesting.

Physical development

65. This is one area where children are on target to reach the goals expected for their age by the end of the Reception year. There is a good area for outdoor play in the nursery with a good range of equipment for physical development. There are regular sessions when children go out in small groups. This means that they benefit from the choice of a wide range of toys and plenty of space in which to move. Teaching is good and activities are carefully planned with just the right amount of adult support so that children develop their skills well. In one such session, the children became more controlled in batting a ball because a nursery assistant showed them how to hold and watch the ball, and then gave them time to practise. Similar strengths were evident in a good lesson in the school hall taken by the Reception class teacher. She and other adults participated alongside the children, providing good models from which to learn. Later their good teamwork meant they observed children closely as they worked, intervening with extra explanations and demonstrations so that children showed good control as they dribbled the ball with their feet. In all these activities, children show good co-operation when asked to work with a partner. They listen carefully to instructions, and try hard to do their best.

Creative development

66. The children's achievements and teaching in this area are good overall, particularly in the Reception class where children have a repertoire of songs and rhymes that they sing enthusiastically and tunefully. However, the adults in the nursery have to work very hard to bring this about. They provide good models for children in their own enthusiastic singing, but younger children often prefer to listen, rather than singing themselves. This was evident in a good session where children learned to perform fast and slow sounds linked to a *Hare and the Tortoise* story theme. They listened intently as the teacher sang and tapped out the beat, then tapped quickly and slowly themselves in time to her singing. However, only a few children made any attempt to join in with the singing. The effectiveness of the teaching in both classes showed clearly when, with adult encouragement and discussion, some children in the Reception class performed a dance as the teacher played a xylophone. They showed a love of dance when they moved with the music as 'twinkly', 'still' or 'sparkly' stars, their eyes sparkling. There are ample opportunities for children to experiment with paint and other media, with the results attractively displayed, particularly in the nursery. The provision for imaginative role-play is a strength, with good resources that excite children's interest. These include a home corner, the 'Garden Centre' and a puppet area in the nursery, and a 'Post Office' in the Reception class. Children show a keen interest initially, but soon lose interest and lack the imagination to develop their play further and staff do not always involve themselves fully in the children's play in order to develop this. In both classes, children play alongside others, rather than developing their play together.

ENGLISH

67. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards in English by the age of seven and eleven present a mixed picture, with strengths and weaknesses in different aspects, but are overall below average. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in reading and although standards are below average in Year 2, standards are broadly average by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils achieve very well in speaking and listening and their attainment is average by Year 2 and better than expected by the time they leave. However, pupils' progress is not always good enough in writing and standards should be higher. Standards in writing are well below average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6.
68. Teaching is satisfactory. The teaching in the English lessons seen was good across the school and sometimes very good. This was because the lessons mainly focused on developing reading and speaking and listening skills. The pupils' work over time, however, shows weaknesses in the support that teaching provides for pupils to reach better standards in writing.
69. Although pupils' speaking skills are poor on entry there is very good improvement. This is because the teachers are very skilled in planning opportunities for discussion, as a whole class, within groups and in pairs. Teachers carefully extend pupils' vocabulary and give them good opportunities to use what they have learned in relevant situations. As a result, pupils make rapid progress and speak confidently. This was seen in a Year 1 lesson where the pupils were keen to be invited to sit in the 'hot seat' and take on the role of a character from a fairy tale or nursery rhyme.

70. Reading standards are improving and pupils achieve well because of good teaching. Pupils in Year 1 are encouraged to develop an interest in books and have a firm grasp of letter sounds. They are beginning to use these skills to construct and read unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 2, pupils are making good progress in reading and their reading diaries show that they read a good number of books. Teaching has had a positive effect on pupils' enjoyment of reading through shared and group reading, which has helped develop confidence in reading aloud to others. Teachers plan interesting activities so that pupils' interest is maintained. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, the teacher used the pupils' interest and knowledge of the local area well, when they were asked to scan text for key words and phrases. By Year 6 pupils make good progress in reading, with the higher attaining pupils reading fluently with good expression and understanding. Higher attaining pupils know how to use the higher order skills of skimming and scanning, and make use of indexes, contents lists and glossaries in non-fiction books for accessing information.
71. Pupils' skills in writing do not advance at such a good rate and there is not enough focus on using and extending skills in writing in other subjects. Pupils' written work is not checked closely enough to make sure that they are making good progress. By the time pupils reach the juniors their speaking and listening skills are more advanced than their writing skills. Pupils in the infants do not make consistently satisfactory gains in their writing skills and so some pupils who are quite confidently expressing what they want to say are not as confident to record this as effectively in writing. Standards in handwriting and spelling are unsatisfactory, but vary across the school because of inconsistent expectations in teaching. There is some exemplary practice in Year 1, where pupils rehearse what they want to write before recording sentences. They use what they know about the sounds of letters as they write. Very good support, in one lesson in Year 1, enabled pupils of all abilities to make excellent progress in writing definitions for a class dictionary. Where teaching is weaker, expectations are lower and the work is not sufficiently challenging. Samples of pupils' work across the school show that pupils are not consistently supported to improve accuracy in punctuation, handwriting and neat presentation. In the juniors, pupils' writing skills improve at a slower rate than that expected of pupils of a similar age. Pupils have an improving vocabulary and their speaking skills are again more advanced than their writing. Pupils in Year 6 are making faster progress in writing because of the high expectations of their teacher. This was seen in their poetry writing on display in the classroom where they had been inspired by Kit Wright's poem *The Frozen Man*. There is also some good writing in the Year 5 class where pupils write accounts of a visit to the Black Country Museum. Teachers, in their marking, do not always give pupils good guidance on what they need to do to improve. As a result, pupils sometimes make the same mistakes in spelling and punctuation. While pupils practise handwriting in short sessions, they do not always use what they have learned when they write for day-to-day purposes. The quality of pupils' writing does not benefit from chances to re-draft their work and to present their work in an improved form. Even though there is some effective use of ICT to enable pupils to re-draft their writing, this is not regular or consistent in its use across the school.
72. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Their work is planned in line with their individual education plans by the class teacher. The needs of all pupils with special educational needs are well met because of good support by the special educational needs co-ordinator in conjunction with the class teacher and also the learning support assistants. Further good support is given to pupils in the Early Literacy Support, Additional Literacy Support and more recently the Further Literacy Support. Unfortunately, the combined impact of all these activities means some pupils miss out on learning in other subjects. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress because their needs are well met.
73. The use of information from assessments to guide teachers' planning is better for speaking and listening and reading than for writing. An improved schedule of assessments in writing is being introduced, but it is too early to see the impact upon standards.
74. The management of the subject is satisfactory. There has been a satisfactory adoption of the National Literacy Strategy supporting the delivery of the subject across the school. Some effective training has been undertaken to improve teaching of reading. The policy has been recently reviewed, and

monitoring of teaching and learning in the classrooms has been undertaken. However, there are too few checks made to ensure that teaching is consistently supporting good progress in all aspects of pupils' work and that pupils' progress is even across the school.

MATHEMATICS

75. Standards are below average by Year 2 and broadly average by Year 6. The pupils of all abilities make good progress as a result of good teaching based on effective planning procedures. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of good teaching in the classroom and in withdrawal groups that especially focuses on their basic skills. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall.
76. The pupils are making good progress in their basic numeracy skills and this is a good improvement since the last inspection. This is the result of good use of brisk mental challenges at the start and often interspersed through the body of the lesson. In Year 1 for example, pupils know that 11 pence needs 9 more pence to make 20 and explain this well. By Year 4 pupils use their knowledge of number well to describe another number; for example, 30 is described as 1000 divided by 100 multiplied by 3. By Year 2, pupils give speedy responses to questions based on two, ten and five times tables and count quickly backwards and forwards. By Year 6 most pupils have a sound grasp of multiplication and division facts. They understand place value to two decimal places and convert decimals to fractions appropriately. There are no significant weaknesses in the pupils' knowledge or use of number and this is a significant improvement on the last inspection.
77. The pupils are making good progress in using and applying their mathematical skills. Pupils in Year 2 use dominoes to solve problems involving grouping and sharing sets of numbers. They write simple mathematical problems for others to solve involving more than one calculation. In Year 5 pupils respond very well to the teacher's skilful way of involving them in working out their own methods to calculate the area of a shape made of two rectangles; "I've got a bit of a problem with this...". The pupils learn to select a suitable way of calculating long division or multiplication. By Year 6, they set their calculations out neatly, although they are mainly taught long forms when many pupils could take short cuts if encouraged. Most of their work is accurate and pupils learn to make accurate estimates to check their answers. Sometimes, however, although the pupils explain the way they have worked out a mathematical problem they are not so good at writing the solution quickly and legibly.
78. Pupils make sound progress in shape and measure and data handling, although they do not have sufficient opportunities to use ICT to help them collect and organise data. The more able pupils in Year 6 have a very good grasp of how to create and interpret pie charts using protractors. The subject leader, working with this group in a lesson, encouraged them to have a go for themselves rather than over-directing them. The average pupils, working with a different teacher, spent too long on a simple task of colouring in areas of a pie chart and so their learning was more limited.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In several lessons in both the juniors and infants it was very good. The pace of teaching is often very brisk and teachers make good use of setting time limits to encourage pupils to think and work hard. In the best lessons, teachers use a good range of methods to encourage pupils to develop their understanding by having to explain their solutions to problems to other pupils or by working with a partner on a white board; "Don't put your hand up, talk to each other." Teachers match work well to individual needs for all abilities in most cases and very good use is made of teaching assistants to support the less able pupils and those with special educational needs. There is often a sense of calm urgency in the best lessons as the teacher constantly asks "Why?" and allows the pupils time to explain their thinking. Most teachers focus well on the use of a good mathematical vocabulary. As a result, pupils in Year 1 know the value of different coins and "find the total". In Year 4, the pupils describe frequency as "the number of times something occurs" and that "a tally chart is like a gate". In the less effective lessons the pace of learning is too slow; for example, clear limits are not set to the time given to pupils to complete their work thus allowing the pupils to plod on with fairly simple tasks. The teachers make satisfactory use of ICT in mathematics. For

examples, the Year 6 pupils organise spreadsheets to create graphs and tables. Almost all pupils enjoy mathematics and take a pride in their work. They rise to the challenge of the brisk and varied lessons.

80. The subject is well led. The subject leader has developed good processes for tracking pupils' achievement and analysing strengths and weaknesses in their learning. After a sudden drop in standards in 2001 the school decided to fund the subject leader to work with groups of pupils to develop pupils' knowledge and problem solving skills. She was well placed to do this because of the quality of assessment and monitoring of standards. This led to an immediate upturn in test results and the work seen indicates continued improvement. Resources are good and the pupils use them well.

SCIENCE

81. Standards in science are broadly average by the end of Year 6, as they were when the school was last inspected. Then, as now, the standards in Year 2 were below average. Whilst most pupils now reach the expected levels by the end of Year 2, too few reach the higher levels. As a result, standards are below average overall. However, there is evidence of significant recent improvement. Standards are above average in Year 1, where challenging, high quality teaching means that pupils make rapid progress. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in lessons from teachers and support assistants so that they often work at the same level as others.
82. There have been good improvements in the school's provision for science since the last inspection and pupils' achievements are now good overall. The unsatisfactory scheme of work has been replaced, so that teachers now have clear guidance on which to base their planning. There is a stronger emphasis on developing pupils' enquiry and investigative skills that is improving the progress pupils make as they move through the school. At present, teachers do not always pitch work at a high enough level for the brightest pupils in their class. This means that pupils do not become as independent as they might in organising and recording their own investigations. However, a new system for checking what pupils can and cannot do in each of the topics has been introduced in a format that clearly shows pupils' progress. This is beginning to help teachers to see more clearly what the groups of differing ability need to do next, so that they can adapt their lesson plans more precisely.
83. The teaching of science has improved and is now good throughout the school. Pupils' attitudes to their work are much better because they enjoy practical investigations. Because they find them interesting, they work hard and show good skills of co-operation when working in pairs or small groups. A good example was seen in Year 1 when pupils shared the jobs and took turns fairly, showing great excitement as they tested different materials to find the best 'sound muffler'. Teachers' lesson planning is effective, and they make sure that pupils know what they are to learn. Their questioning is a shared strength that encourages pupils to think hard, explain their ideas and listen carefully to what others have to say. In a lesson on electricity in Year 2 pupils had a good understanding of how an electrical circuit works because the teacher checked their understanding by well-targeted questions in her introduction. When they set to work, they handled equipment sensibly and safely. They observed closely so that they confidently explained which materials were the 'conductors' and the 'insulators'. However, some pupils in the class missed the practical experiences and discussions when they were withdrawn for extra support work in literacy and numeracy. This slows their progress in developing science skills and the depth of understanding of science topics.
84. Very good and excellent teaching was seen in lessons in Year 1 and Year 6 where teachers had high expectations of their pupils. In these lessons, pupils were challenged to think for themselves and use what they already know in trying to explain their experiments. For example, pupils used their previous knowledge of gravity as they explained why the pencil sharpener fell when the teacher let it go, saying "the mass of the earth is greater than the mass of the pencil sharpener". The teacher gave them time to think as they watched paper falling, and then prompted them to explain further so that they found the answers themselves. In this way they developed a firm understanding of how air resistance affects falling objects. Good relationships and the teacher's use of humour meant pupils were totally absorbed in the discussions. "Science is fun" and "He explains it so well" are examples of pupils' comments. Both here and in Year 1 pupils were well aware of what makes a test fair because teachers constantly

prompted them to check and explain this so that others would understand as well. “We are going to keep the sound the same, just change the material,” explained a child in Year 1 and “You can’t have the papers at different levels – that’s two variables,” from a pupil in Year 6 as he watched the teacher’s demonstration.

85. The school is well placed for further improvement. The science co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management of the subject, and has identified the right priorities for improvement. She has little time out of her classroom to monitor teaching. More could be done to raise the quality of teaching to that of the best by highlighting and adopting more consistently the features that are particularly effective.

ART AND DESIGN

86. Standards have improved well since the last inspection when they were below expected levels. They are now average and there are several examples of high quality work in both the infants and the juniors. Pupils of all abilities achieve well. The rise in standards is a result of the development of a new scheme of work that puts more emphasis on the development of pupils’ skills while still retaining the best links with other subjects.
87. By Year 2, the pupils experience a broad curriculum. They achieve good standards in weaving textiles and show a good ability to select colours and textures to create, for example, the effect of the burning streets of the Great Fire of London or, in Year 1, a seaside scene. Pupils make exciting sculptures with tree bark, wood and paper and glue, based on studies of professional artists’ work. This is successfully linked to drawings and pastel pictures and shows an emerging awareness of light and shade. Pupils have good experiences of working with paint and in mixing and choosing their own colours.
88. The pupils continue to experience a good range of different art experiences through the juniors. They study the work of different artists, including researching for information on the Internet. In Year 3, the pupils use paints and crayons to work in the style of the Russian artist, Kasmir Malevich, and to create pictures of flowers reflecting the work of Georgia O’ Keefe. In Year 4, the pupils use the digital camera well to learn about perspective and make humorous studies of everyday objects such as soft toys and climbing equipment in the school yard. There is, however, limited use of other types of ICT to support pupils’ learning in art and design. There is a good quality of hat designs in Year 6 as part of an extended design project. They are constructed well using good techniques for cutting and measuring which draw successfully upon skills learned in mathematics and design and technology.
89. The pupils have very positive attitudes. In Year 6 the pupils said, “We love art. It’s exciting and makes us think.” In Year 5 pupils work with absolute confidence in their ability to select the fabrics they need to create their collage and work in a calm and almost professional manner.
90. The quality of teaching and learning is good. No lessons were observed in the infants but discussions with pupils and observations of their work support this judgement. In the juniors, the evidence is reinforced by lesson observations. There is good preparation and use of a wide range of resources. The pace of teaching is good. Pupils are given the opportunity to practise and rehearse their ideas. The teachers make sure the pupils are equipped with the language to discuss their work, such as ‘viewpoint’ and ‘image’ in their work on perspective. They are taught specific techniques well, such as sketching techniques and ways to use paint to capture, for example, different emotions expressed in peoples’ faces, through their artwork.
91. The subject is led well with enthusiasm and support. However, the methods to spread the best practice are informal and the co-ordinator has limited opportunities to rigorously pursue them. The subject is well resourced and displays are often of high quality.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. Standards in design and technology by the age of seven and eleven are above those of pupils of the same age. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress over time. This is a good improvement on the last inspection.
93. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There are examples of high quality finished work in both the juniors and infants. For example, Year 1 pupils are engaged in making wooden framed structures following on from their work on designing and making models of playground furniture built first from straws. Pupils in Year 4 have completed very good work on designing and making torches. This project had a direct and purposeful link with science because pupils drew upon their knowledge of circuits to light the bulb in their torch and to switch it on and off. In Year 6, there is very good work in designing and making shelters, resulting in high quality models. Some useful links were made with literacy when pupils wrote about their designs. In a lesson observed in Year 6, pupils were investigating the purpose and design needs for making slippers. In this lesson, all pupils engaged in making a prototype from card and paper. They then evaluated the requirements, such as the materials needed to ensure strength and comfort and so ensure a successful finished article. The teachers plan lessons well, meeting the needs of pupils successfully. They question pupils closely to improve their understanding. The examples of projects in other year groups include pupils investigating packaging, making musical instruments, designing and making moving vehicles and pop-up cards, and photograph frames. Whilst there are good examples across the school of pupils' designing and making, some are not to the same standard as in the year groups above and do not always ensure consistent progress as pupils move through the school.
94. Pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They take a pride in constructing models carefully and enjoy explaining their ideas to others. Most pupils work hard.
95. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject co-ordinator's enthusiasm is infectious and this has the effect of inspiring staff and pupils alike through demonstration lessons and in the work he has covered with his class. For example, in a 'design and make' project on headwear, pupils had the opportunity to access the Internet and computer programs to research different types of headwear and then design and make their own, based on the theme of flowers. Further opportunities for pupils were seen in the visit of 'The Bridge Builders', a group who visited the school and where pupils engaged in designing and making bridges from wooden slats. Resources are very good and include design trolleys for the infants and juniors and a portable oven for food technology.

GEOGRAPHY

96. No geography lessons were seen during the inspection, but evidence from pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils indicates that standards in geography are average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is similar to the standards found when the school was last inspected and improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
97. Teaching is at least satisfactory, so that pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 know of places around Birmingham and others further away that Barnaby Bear visits on his travels. They look at maps and atlases and pinpoint the places he visits on a world map. They learn of life on the Isle of Struay, comparing features like people's jobs and their transport and then compare them with those in Tipton.
98. Pupils make particularly good progress in Year 5 and 6. A topic on rivers was well structured with thorough coverage that gave pupils a good understanding of rivers and the water supply. A visit to Trimpey water treatment works gave a good boost to pupils' enthusiasm as well as their knowledge and understanding of how the water supply is made safe. This was evident when they produced informative brochures promoting Trimpey. As a result of these activities, they have a good grasp of meanders, waterfalls and other river features as well as understanding how water is collected and supplied to their homes. There is a good emphasis on pupils interpreting the information and evidence they have about the places they study in Year 6. As a result, pupils produce well-written letters describing aspects of life in Tocuaro, Mexico. Their secure mapping skills are evident when they draw

plans of the Horta family's home, and plot different routes to Mexico from England, successfully using atlases to prove their accuracy.

99. In some classes the coverage of topics is fairly shallow compared to these well-planned units of work and so pupils' learning is not as strong. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management and is currently compiling a portfolio of good examples of pupils' work. A new assessment sheet looks promising, but more could be done to check on the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that pupils make equally good progress in every class.

HISTORY

100. Standards are above expected levels by Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils of all abilities make good progress. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are particularly good. However, some opportunities are missed to improve pupils' writing skills. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Improvement since the last inspection is good.
101. By Year 2, pupils have a sound understanding of changes over time and chronological order. The teachers place a strong emphasis on a vocabulary for pupils to describe historical situations. For example, in Year 1 pupils describe old toys as 'well loved', 'worn out' and 'faded'. They recognise that older toys are often made of wood rather than plastic. As a result of the challenging questioning by the teacher, pupils know which is the oldest toy: "because he's tatty, he's well worn and ripping." The Year 2 pupils have a very good knowledge of the Great Fire of London because they have undertaken their own research, including study on the Internet, after being inspired by a video. Pupils of all abilities know that the fire started in Pudding Lane and describe, in full gory detail, the fate of the owner. They know that the events took place long ago and that Samuel Pepys recorded the events in his diary as they actually happened. They appreciate that that is different from the information in history books, which were written after the event. They enjoy their artwork linked to the topic.
102. By Year 6, pupils have built up a good knowledge of historical events and continued to improve their understanding of change over time. They have a particularly good understanding of how historical events impact on the future. For example, they have studied how slum clearance changed the local environment and nature of housing. They have a good knowledge of local history from the Victorians to the current day through their visits to the industrial and other museums. They make use of ICT to conduct their own research. There is not, however, enough use of these opportunities to extend pupils' understanding of note taking and précising their work in order to improve writing skills. However, they show a good empathy with characters from the past in role-play and story writing. The Year 3 pupils enjoy being archaeologists and identifying Saxon artefacts and this encourages their curiosity and interest in the past. The teachers arrange stimulating visitors to support learning, such as a 'Roman' soldier. The Year 4 pupils enjoyed their work on the Tudor period and were highly motivated by an excellent lesson involving an old 'Tudor' chest of artefacts. They particularly enjoy the idea that the rich took their windows with them when they went on holiday.
103. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The lessons are built from a good scheme of work, which helps pupils make consistent progress. There is a lot of imagination shown in the methods used by teachers, including role-play. Pupils' behaviour is managed well. A particular strength is in the good links made between history and other subjects such as art and design, and design and technology. The subject is well resourced and good use is made of ICT, including digital photography. A temporary co-ordinator purposefully leads the subject. There are good resources and the school makes effective use of library and museum loan services.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

104. The standards of attainment are in line with those expected of pupils by the age of seven and eleven. This is a similar judgement to the last inspection and improvement has been satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress; all other groups of pupils make sound progress.

105. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Pupils make good use of the computers in each classroom. In addition, computers available in each shared area are used well. The school has recently purchased an interactive whiteboard; the subject co-ordinator made good use of this new equipment to help a small group discuss the events and characters in a book, which supported their reading skills well. Pupils were confidently taking turns to write on the board and building up information on each chapter that was then saved for later use. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils used the board to look at the format of spreadsheets and to create a formula to calculate totals supporting their learning effectively.
106. Pupils have good attitudes to ICT and confidently use listening centres, a digital camera, scanners, electronic dictionaries and computer applications. Pupils use control technology and program instructions to a toy robot to move backwards and forward and to make left and right turns. The school also has traffic lights that can be programmed to switch on in sequence and also sensors and an electronic microscope. However, the use of sensors is as yet undeveloped as is the pupils' learning in simulations, although there are programs available for use. In discussion with the older pupils, they were able to explain what they had done on the computers and most say they have computers at home and are keen to continue their learning after school. However, at the present time there is a weakness in the consistent use of ICT to support pupils' learning in other curriculum areas, specifically in word-processing and data handling.
107. The subject co-ordinator has worked hard to raise the profile of ICT across the school, but the process has been recently held up by the contractor who has the responsibility for getting the school network up and running and this had still not been completed satisfactorily prior to the inspection. There is a technician who visits the school once a week to attend to any needs in the use of equipment, ensuring that the ICT hardware is available for teaching and learning. The school has a clear and useful policy for teaching ICT. The school fulfils its responsibility to ensure that parents receive advice about the safe use of the Internet and seeks their consent for its use with the children in school. The scheme of work is based on national guidance, which provides a satisfactory steer for the subject. Parents have been involved in the development of computing in the school and have attended a 'Parents on Line' Internet evening, which supports them with helping their children at home.

MUSIC

108. Standards in music are in line with those expected in Years 2 and 6. This is a similar judgement to the previous inspection and improvement since then has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall.
109. The pupils' attitudes to music are good. Pupils' singing is tuneful and joyful, with very clear diction so that all of the words can be clearly heard. There are good displays of musical instruments made by pupils and linked to pupils' work in science on 'sound'. Pupils have benefited from a visit by two musicians who extended the pupils' knowledge of a range of stringed instruments and let pupils experience playing them. The music room represents good accommodation for the teaching of music and there is a good range of musical resources and instruments to support pupils' learning. Only two lessons were seen; however, it was possible to gain evidence of musical activities that have occurred, both in and out of the school, to allow pupils to practise, refine and improve their performances. For example, at Christmas the children performed 'Carols by Candlelight' in the church and in the school the infants performed 'Rock the Baby', with the juniors performing 'The Peace Child'. In addition to singing to the elderly in the local library and singing in Lichfield Cathedral, the pupils took part in the Black Country Carol Service, which was performed completely in the local dialect. Pupils in Year 2, in one lesson, varied their voices to make high and low, loud and soft sounds at the teacher's instruction. They followed the pattern of notes given by a classmate well. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils suggested sounds that could be used to represent different seasons and sensibly chose instruments to make, for example, sounds of the night.
110. Progress has been made in developing listening skills and in experimenting with sound, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their own musical compositions. There is a visiting teacher

for brass and two music clubs, one for the infants and one for the juniors, which help to develop pupils' musical skills further.

111. The music co-ordinator has specific musical expertise and engages in some of the teaching of music, such as music in the early years. To support and develop teachers' knowledge and understanding the co-ordinator gave demonstrations to teaching staff last year, which helped to raise their confidence and expertise. The scheme of work is based on national guidance and provides a clear framework for teaching and learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

112. Standards are average by Year 2 and above average by Year 6. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils of all abilities make good progress. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
113. Throughout the school, pupils have a sound awareness of health and safety in physical education. As a result they use space well and are very aware of other pupils when moving at speed. A significant strength in all aspects of the subject is the opportunity teachers create for pupils to evaluate their own work and experiment. There is good use of demonstrations by groups and individuals to set benchmarks for others to work towards. Year 2 pupils enjoy the challenge of forming sequences of balances linked with rolls and jumps. Their work shows imagination and energy. In the juniors, pupils show a good awareness of using different levels in their dance work and develop increasingly complex movements as parts of a 'machine'. They do this well because of opportunities to discuss, share, and observe each other.
114. Pupils make good progress in developing games' skills because lessons are well prepared and teachers' knowledge and understanding are good. In an excellent lesson in Year 6 the pupils' basic hockey skills were good. They dribbled the ball with speed and accuracy and were very aware of positional play. They are competitive without being aggressive. Almost all pupils are able to swim 25 metres by Year 6 and successfully work towards the school's own challenging water safety award.
115. Pupils thoroughly enjoy physical education and work very hard. The teachers make good use of personal target setting so that pupils are eager to beat their own record in activities involving speed or accuracy.
116. The quality of teaching is good. The pupils' behaviour is managed well and all teachers use humour well to motivate and encourage pupils to take part and do even better. Lessons are well prepared and very good use is made of the school's outdoor and indoor resources. The pace of teaching is often brisk with clear time limits for activities. In the best lessons, teachers explain to the pupils exactly what they expect them to learn and consistently involve the pupils in checking their achievement by asking good questions, such as "Why do you think you did better this time?"
117. There is a new subject co-ordinator. She has successfully taken on the action plan of the previous holder of the post. The staff are trying out new planning for some aspects of the subject and are very evaluative in their feedback to the co-ordinator. There are sound processes in place to monitor standards of learning. The school has made good use of grants for playground and resource provision. The school has successfully bid for a 'trim trail'. Out-of-school activities give the pupils good opportunities to develop games and gymnastic skills.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

118. Standards in religious education are in line with the expectations of the local agreed syllabus for pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6, as they were when the school was last inspected. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily

119. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory. The school has rightly identified two main areas for improvement: the planning guidance, and systems for checking how well pupils are doing. A new scheme of work is imminent but, at present, the guidance is not clear enough. Teachers use two different planning systems, selecting parts of each as a basis for their lesson plans. As a result, there is thin coverage of topics and over-emphasis on factual information in some classes that leads to inconsistent progress. Whilst teachers know their pupils well, they do not routinely check what pupils can and cannot do. This means that they do not pick up what pupils do well and what needs to be improved through further experiences. These features mean that pupils' progress, whilst satisfactory overall, is not as good as it might be.
120. Pupils have a good knowledge of major world religions, that becomes more detailed by the time they leave the school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 know of the Hindu naming ceremony, Diwali, Hanukkah and other celebrations. Displays do much to stimulate pupils' interest. For instance, an interactive "Can you match the words?" display of artefacts in Year 4 prompts pupils to learn the correct names of Sikh artefacts like the Kara, Kangha and Kirdan. A visit to Grace Community Church in Year 5 successfully widens pupils' awareness and understanding of how other Christian denominations worship. However, more could be done to enable pupils in other classes to enrich their appreciation of other faiths by visits to places like a mosque or a synagogue that feature in the local area.
121. Very good teaching in a Year 6 lesson meant that pupils not only developed a good knowledge of Sikhism, but also made links with their own lives as they explored how Sikhs show respect in their use of symbols and the way they worship. The teacher used photographs effectively as a basis for his skilled questioning, so that pupils observed carefully and gave good explanations about the significance of the Guru Granth Sahib. A brisk pace and very good relationships meant that pupils concentrated well and showed high levels of enthusiasm. They not only gave good answers, but also asked questions of their own. "Where is the original book and fan kept?" is one good example. The teacher constantly used the correct words, prompting pupils to do the same. As a result, they confidently use a good vocabulary of words associated with Sikhism. However, in some classes, particularly where there is heavy use of factual worksheets, pupils do not reflect enough on what they can learn from other faiths to use in their own lives.
122. The work on faiths, and themes such as respect, sharing and friendship, all make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In Year 1 pupils understand the importance of sharing when they explore bible stories like the sharing of the loaves and fishes. In Year 2, pupils wrote sensitive "Thank you" prayers and their thoughts on friendship. "Friendship is sharing your toyswith everybody" is an example. There were good opportunities for pupils to express their feelings in Years 3 and 5 when they produced interesting paintings and collages based on the 'Creation' theme. There are missed opportunities for pupils to use and extend their skills in writing through the subject.
123. The leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The recently appointed co-ordinator has a good view of what needs to be done, but the present systems for checking on teaching and learning are underdeveloped. This means weaker aspects of the school's provision are not picked up as quickly as they might be.